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Title: A Clash of Civilisations? Culture and Ideology in US-Iran Relations

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This thesis explores US-Iran relations since 1979, emphasising the cultural and ideological aspects of the relationship. It aims to examine why, despite opportunities, a constructive dialogue has not yet been achieved. It challenges the US's stated view of Iranian foreign policy and argues that it is the preponderance of ideology in the relationship, not the US's strategic concerns with Iranian behaviour, that has thwarted rapprochement. It uses Gramsci's ideas on hegemony to examine firstly, the ideological conflict between the two since 1979 and secondly, the remarkable consensus of attitudes towards Iran in Washington. Within the thesis, the impact on relations of the 'Track 2' process, President Khatami and the Israeli lobby in Washington are also examined. The thesis concludes that, until the ideological aspects of the relationship are addressed and until perceptions and attitudes are challenged, there can be no way forward for relations.

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A Clash of Civilisations?
Culture and Ideology in US-Iran Relations
Since 1979

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MA by Research (Middle Eastern Studies)
Institute of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies
University of Durham 2002



- 6 DEC 2004

CONTENTS

Introduction	3
1. A Framework for Analysis	7
1.1 Realism	8
1.2 Ideology	10
1.3 The concept of hegemony as a useful tool for analysis	11
1.4 The Washington policy monopoly	18
1.5 The Case Study	18
1.6 Methodology	19
2. Iranian Foreign Policy Analysed	20
2.1 Iran as a Patron of International Terrorism	21
2.2 Opposition to Israel	26
2.3 Iran as a Pursuer of Weapons of Mass Destruction	30
2.4 Iran and the Region	36
2.4 Human Rights	42
3. The Cultural and Ideological Conflict	43
3.1 The Origins of Iran's Animosity	44
3.2 The US View	49
3.3 The Lasting Effect	64
4. The Washington Policy Monopoly	72
4.1 The Mechanics of the American Foreign Policy Making System	75
4.1.2 The Defence Department	80
4.1.3 The Israeli Lobby	82
4.2 Challenges to the Status Quo	97
4.2.1 The 'Track 2' Process	97
4.2.2 Khatami and Domestic Politics in Iran	99
5. Case Study: the Aftermath of September 11 th	105

Conclusion	115
Appendix: Documents	119
Bibliography	120
<u>Figures</u>	
Fig 1.	91
Fig 2.	103

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

As the Clinton Administration drew to a close it seemed as if the thaw in US-Iranian relations was well under way. No direct dialogue between the two governments had been established but impromptu meetings and discussions behind the scenes were taking place and numerous positive statements were being made. In August 1998 US Secretary of State, Madeline Albright and Iran's foreign minister, Kamal Kharazi both attended a UN meeting to discuss Afghanistan. Officially they did not speak to each other but officials admitted that there was "symbolic significance in the fact that Ms. Albright and Mr Kharazi are likely to be in the same room for hours."¹ Encouraged by the Reformist's overwhelming parliamentary victory in February 2000, Madeline Albright's speech soon after to the American-Iranian Council sounded an even more positive note. "My hope is that both in Iran and in the United States, we can plant the seeds now for a new and better relationship in years to come."² American sanctions on products such as food, medicines and luxury goods were also lifted.

Such overtures were not one sided. President Khatami announced in 1997: "we are in favour of relations with all countries and nations who respect our independence, dignity and interests."³ Furthermore, in his now famous CNN interview in 1998, Khatami called for increased cultural relations between the US and Iran in what he termed 'a dialogue of civilisations'. There were encouraging signs that Iran was reforming, both domestically and in its foreign policy. Attitudes to the Middle East peace process were becoming less defiant. Iran was improving relations with many former adversaries including the Gulf countries. Support for Islamic extremists was declining and Iran was playing a constructive role in conflicts such as those in Afghanistan and Azerbaijan.

There was strong evidence in 2000 to suggest that the new American administration would continue on the same line of cautious rapprochement. Both the incumbent President Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney were closely associated with the oil industry and were therefore under pressure to lift sanctions to allow American companies into Iran. The security and economic interests of America and Iran continued

¹ Shenon, P., 'US and Iran in Further Thaw, Will Join in Afghan Talks', The New York Times, (19 September 1998), [www.nyt.com]

² Albright, M., 'American-Iranian Relations', Remarks before the American-Iranian Council, (17 March 2000), [secretary.state.gov/www/statements/2000/000317]

³ Khatami, M., Hope and Challenge: the Iranian President Speaks, (Binghampton University Press, New York, 1997), p.96

to converge suggesting that improved relations would be inevitable. Mutual concerns over Afghanistan continued to deepen and mutual economic benefits from trade and investment, especially in the oil and gas sector remained. Furthermore Iran was building constructive relations with many of the US's allies including Japan, Europe and Russia, leaving America more and more isolated in its stance.

Despite all of the above, recent decisions and statements by the current US government have reiterated the hard line of the dual containment policy. The most recent US Patterns of Global Terrorism Report of 2001 states: "Iran remained the most active state sponsor of terrorism. Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS) continued to be involved in the planning and support of terrorist acts and supported a variety of groups that use terrorism to pursue their goals ... Iran continued to provide Lebanese Hizballah and the Palestinian rejectionist groups – notably HAMAS, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and the PFLP-GC – with varying amounts of funding, safehaven, training and weapons. It also encouraged Hizballah and the rejectionist Palestinian groups to co-ordinate their planning and escalate their activities."⁴ In June 2001 the Iran and Libya Sanctions Act (ILSA) was extended until 2006.⁵ A State Department press statement justified the extension, saying: "We continue to be deeply concerned about Iran's pursuit of weapons of mass destruction and missile delivery systems, its support for terrorism, including groups violently opposed to Middle East peace, and its poor human rights record. We continue to oppose investment in Iran's petroleum sector and the ILSA remains US law."⁶ Likewise in Iran, whilst relations have been normalising with many other former enemies, suggestions of relations with America remain unacceptable to the conservative faction in the government, which includes Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Khamenei.

In the immediate aftermath of the September 11th terrorist attacks in America, there were again some signs of improving relations. There was a general consensus in Washington that Iran was co-operating very constructively in Afghanistan, applying diplomatic pressure to the Northern Alliance, providing considerable aid and even offering to rescue downed US pilots. However any hope of this leading to direct

⁴ US State Department, Patterns of Global Terrorism 2001, (May 2002), [www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/pgtrpt/2000/index]

⁵ This Act, first established in 1996, excludes any company that invests over \$20 million in Iran from operating in Iran

communication was shattered with President Bush's 'State of the Union' address in January 2002. In it Bush declared: "Iran aggressively pursues these weapons and exports terror, while an unelected few repress the Iranian people's hope for freedom" and along with North Korea and Iraq, Iran "constitutes an 'axis of evil', arming to threaten the peace of the world."⁷

The aim of this thesis is to explore, why in the face of these numerous opportunities, rapprochement has consistently failed. This thesis aims to look beyond the mere strategic differences between the two countries and focuses on the cultural and ideological aspects of the conflict. It explores the validity of the US's interpretation of Iranian behaviour and concludes that the US view is distorted by a long-standing ideological conflict. The ideological complexities of the relationship must be addressed if relations are to improve.

⁶ US State Department Spokesman, Question taken at the April 25 2001 Press Briefing, (21st April 2001), [www.State.gov/r/pa/prs/2001/index]

⁷ Bush, G.W., The President's State of the Union Address, (29 January 2002), [www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/01/print/20020129-11]

CHAPTER 1: A FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS

1. A FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS

1.1 Realism

The principle basis of 'realism' is that the state is the primary actor and the main concern of the state's leaders is to protect the interests of, and therefore ensure the survival of, the state. In the past, especially during the Cold War, "realism taught American leaders to focus on interests rather than ideology, and to realise that great powers can coexist even if they have antithetical values and beliefs."⁸ America names five principle concerns when justifying its policy of isolation and rejection of Iran: (1) support for international terrorism, (2) opposition to Israel and the Middle East peace process, (3) proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, (4) threats and subversive activities against its neighbours and (5) its "dismal" human rights record.⁹ America consistently maintains that unless Iran remedies the above then relations with Iran are unacceptable. This seems to support the notion of 'realism' being prevalent in US foreign policy making. It seems on face value that America's problem with Iran relates to 'real,' strategic threats to American and world interests. The implication is therefore that if Iran desists from the above then America would be prepared to establish relations.

The reality of the US-Iran relations is however considerably more complex. An analysis based purely on 'realism' is inadequate. America's interpretation of the Iranian 'threat' is heavily contested and not just by Iran. Many American academics argue that accusations levelled at Iran are often exaggerated and unjustified. This is explored in detail in Chapter 2, which concludes, as does the US academic James Bill, that: "there is a glaring lack of evidence to support most of the allegations" and that "many of the past accusations made against Iran have been quietly proven false."¹⁰ Graham Fuller, a senior analyst at the RAND Corporation agrees, saying of the concerns with Iran: "while seeming quite straightforward and explicit, they are in fact a complex mixture of fact, semi-fact and much politically convenient but quite selective interpretation of

⁸ Dunne, T., 'Realism' in The Globalization of World Politics, John Baylis & Steve Smith (eds), (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1998), p.110

⁹ US State Department, Background Notes: Iran, (updated December 2001), [www.state.gov/r/pa/bgn/5341]

¹⁰ Tarock, A., 'US-Iran relations: heading for confrontation?', in Third World Quarterly, vol. 17, (1996), p.153

reality. As such they are subject to multiple interpretation.”¹¹ It is important to note however, that much of the American position is based on inaccessible classified intelligence, which cannot be independently verified. Much of the analysis is therefore subject to conjecture and supported by inconclusive and politicised evidence.

Moreover, in recent years, continued estrangement has often directly opposed both American and Iranian interests. Whilst the economic and strategic interests of both Iran and America have continued to converge, relations have been at best static and at worst diverging. If American foreign policy was based purely in ‘realism’ then the benefits from the oil and gas trade and co-operation on Afghanistan and Iraq (particularly post September 11th) would have led to the establishment of some kind of dialogue, probably following the European model. Since the Iran-Iraq War, Iran’s priority has been the development of its economy. It was therefore in Iran’s interest to move away from revolutionary zeal, towards pragmatic policies designed to re-integrate Iran into the international scene. American interests lie, not in isolation but in cultivating this pragmatism.

An analysis of US-Iran relations must therefore go beyond an analysis of real interests, and examine the long-standing ideological misunderstandings and antagonism within the relationship. The notion of the ‘clash of civilisations’, which was coined in Huntington’s now infamous article published in 1993¹², is symbolic of a gradual shift within US policy and attitudes towards Iran and the Islamic world as a whole since the 1979 Iranian Revolution. The US has moved away from a largely pragmatic approach, towards the ideological. Well into the first decade of the revolution, America still perceived Iran as a state within the world system. Iran remained a state, which the US considered it necessary to work and negotiate with to the benefit of American interests. More recently however, the US has begun to see an Islamic Iran as a state outside the system and a threat to the system. This is explained, not by an increase in practical difficulties within the relationship, but in the growth and solidification of the ideological and cultural conflict. William Beeman believes that after 1979: “the two nations went beyond simple misunderstanding or conflict of interests, and their differences were essentially cultural. Each nation, led by governmental leaders, constructed a

¹¹ Fuller, G., ‘Repairing US-Iranian Relations,’ Middle East Policy, vol. 6 (1998), [www.mepc.org]

¹² Huntington, S.P., ‘The Clash of Civilisations?’, Foreign Affairs, vol. 72, no. 3, (1993), pp.22-49

mythological image that served to 'demonise' the other."¹³ In short, both Iran and the US have constructed an image of the other that has detrimentally distorted the relationship ever since.

1.2 Ideology

Chapter 3 examines these perceptions, exploring the historical and ideological basis of the conflict and its lasting effect on the relationship. The ideological nature of the American Iranian conflict makes an exclusively realist analysis of the relationship very difficult. As Mannheim's theory on ideology suggests, the realist basis of current American policy cannot be separated from ideology. Mannheim developed a theory on ideology that said that everyone operates within ideology. Objectivity is therefore impossible. Everyone is influenced by perspectives, belief systems, past experiences and environment and cannot remove themselves from these when analysing a situation or making a decision. When policy makers construct a policy, for example towards Iran, they are influenced by their own ideological perspective and are therefore unable to make decisions about what is in the national interest in a vacuum. Charles Taber, in his work on foreign policy belief systems, states: "through selective perception and distortion, decision makers bias incoming information about the world to conform to preconception. In addition, decision makers may develop rigid belief systems containing highly simplified images that restrict flexibility in the diagnosis of world events and in the choice among perceived alternatives."¹⁴ Forming policy based on the national interest, in other words 'realism', is therefore ideological in itself.

American policy is presented in realist terms to make it acceptable. Policy can only be justified if it is seen to be a rational, objective analysis of a situation. Policymakers cannot admit and may not be able to see the role ideology plays in their decision making. If they could then their decisions lose the legitimacy of objectivity and rationality and become mere subjective opinions. This has occurred in the case of Iran; the US has presented five tangible concerns to justify policy but in reality the US perception of the Iranian threat is based on contestable and highly subjective evidence. The US has not formed policy based purely on an objective analysis of Iran's behaviour.

¹³ Beeman, W., 'Double Demons: Cultural Impedance in US-Iranian Understanding' in *Iran at the Crossroads in a turbulent decade*, Miran Rezun (ed), (Westview Press, Oxford, 1990), p.165

Iran's image, past animosity and outside influences have all played a part in influencing perceptions of Iran's actions, making the formation of a rational, unprejudiced policy impossible.

1.3 The concept of hegemony as a useful tool for analysis

The ideological antagonism between the US and Iran, discussed in chapter 3, can be explained in terms of Iran's challenge to American ideology. Post Revolutionary Iran is seen by America as an opponent of its ideological basis and a direct threat to its ideological standing in the world. Iran was and is still seen as a challenge to a growing ideological consensus and therefore outside the world system. This is a theme that runs throughout all aspects of the ideological conflict. The US experience of the 1979 Revolution and beyond, the perception of Islam and Iran's revolutionary ideology are all ideas that have helped construct the idea of Iran as an opponent of America's ideological basis and ambitions. This perception has, in turn, helped to entrench the antagonistic relationship we see today. This idea of Iran being the antithesis and direct opponent of American ideology means Washington cannot see any possibility of Iran being a constructive member of the international system. Isolation and condemnation is therefore deemed to be the only feasible policy option.

It is here that Gramsci's concept of hegemony is useful as a tool for analysis. Gramsci was concerned with class conflict and therefore using his theory in the realm of international relations has obvious limitations. However many of his ideas, particularly on hegemony, are helpful in exploring the power ideas can have over political and social environments. It is crucial to note here that the term hegemony has many different meanings in many different disciplines. Its use in this thesis is limited to the definition outlined below.

Gramsci was a Marxist but unlike some believed that the concept of the structure (economic wellbeing) dictating the superstructure (politics and ideas) was over simplified. He did not accept that the collapse of a capitalist economy would automatically bring about communism. If this was the case he argued, then Italy would

¹⁴ Taber, C., 'Poli: An Expert System Model of US Foreign Policy Belief Systems', American Political Science Review, vol. 86, no. 4, (1992)

have become communist not fascist after the economic collapse following the First World War. Gramsci believed that there was reciprocal relationship between the structure and superstructure, saying: “the claim ... that every fluctuation of politics and ideology can be presented and expounded as an immediate expression of the structure, must be contested in theory as primitive infantilism.”¹⁵

Gramsci therefore believed that ideas must play a more significant part in any revolution. He argued the need to produce a consensus of opinion. Taking over the modes of production through force was not enough. To obtain economic and political supremacy, he insisted it was necessary to persuade people that the communist movement was in their own interests. This was termed a ‘war of position’. He proposed to conduct this war of position through education, using institutions such as the church, the school system, the press, political parties and even the family. Intellectuals were therefore deemed by Gramsci crucial to any revolution; they were the people in the position to influence opinions and perceptions. It is important to note that Gramsci’s definition of an intellectual is broader than one would commonly expect. According to David Forgacs, he defines intellectuals as: “anyone whose function in society is primarily that of organizing, administrating, directing, educating or leading others.”¹⁶ These intellectuals would help overthrow the old order by propagating a new, comprehensive, universally accepted ideology.

Gramsci saw ideological periods as ‘historic blocs’, which could only be recognised in retrospect. In the establishment of an historic bloc Gramsci described three levels of political consciousness or moments.¹⁷ The first, the economic-corporate level describes an awareness of common interest amongst a specific group. Gramsci uses the example of a tradesman feeling solidarity with another tradesman, a manufacturer with another manufacturer but there are no feelings of solidarity between manufacturer and tradesman. The second level of consciousness occurs when an entire social group or class deem themselves to have common interests, but these interests remain entirely economic. It is when the interests of one group transcend a whole society including

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p.190

¹⁶ Forgacs, D., *A Gramsci Reader*, (Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1988), p.300

¹⁷ See Gramsci, A. in *A Gramsci Reader*, David Forgacs (ed), p.205-206 and Cox, R.W., ‘Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations: an Essay on Method’ in *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations*, Gill, S. (ed), (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1993), p.57

subordinate groups that the hegemonic level is reached. Gramsci describes this stage as:

“The phase in which previously germinated ideologies become ‘party’, come into confrontation and conflict, until only one of them, or at least a single combination of them, tends to prevail, to gain the upper hand, to propagate itself over the whole area – bringing about not only a unison of economic and political aims, but also intellectual and moral unity, posing all the questions around which the struggle rages not on a corporate but on a ‘universal plane, and thus creating the hegemony of a fundamental social group over a series of subordinate groups.”¹⁸

In other words a universally accepted, consensus of opinion about what is right evolves so that no one questions whether the ideology of the ruling class is not that of society.

Gramsci makes an important separation between domination and hegemony. Domination occurs through forcing an idea or will on others (what Gramsci terms a ‘war of movement’¹⁹), but hegemony occurs through consensus. An ideology must be seen as in the universal interest to be hegemonic. Both domination and hegemony are useful tools to any group or society wishing to achieve national or international supremacy but are seen by Gramsci as distinct.

The formation of the US's global ideology

Before being able to understand the nature of the Iranian challenge, it must be made clear what exactly Iran was seen to be challenging. Since the Second World War, what can be described as a world hegemony has been evolving, with America its driving force. America emerged from the War with a strong sense of self-belief in their nation, their free society, and their capitalist system. The Nazis and fascists of Europe and Japan symbolised everything that the US and its ideology were not. The horrors of the war only reinforced to Americans that the American ‘way’ was right and should be followed the world over. American ideology had evolved out of the Christian pilgrim and anti colonialist tradition. America fought Britain for the right to be free and

¹⁸ Gramsci, A. in *A Gramsci Reader*, David Forgacs (ed), p.205

¹⁹ Cox, R.W., ‘Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations: an Essay on Method’, p.52

independent. Protecting these hard fought rights of democracy and freedom became the basis of a strong universally accepted American ideology.

By the twentieth century and Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points and the League of Nations, America began to see these beliefs in a global, universal sense. Following the Second World War, the Soviet Union bloc took on the role of the Other and again American society was convinced of the evilness of communism and the rightness of liberalism. Using American ideology as a tool to dominate the world was never a conscious political decision, but arose because of the strength of belief in the US in the 'American way'. As once one of two superpowers and now the sole superpower, America has felt a certain duty to promote and protect what they see as the 'correct' and only path of development. Any opposition to American way is seen in the context of a direct challenge to the basis of the American state itself and as such is seen as a threat.

In its movement towards global dominance, the US has had two tools at its disposal. The first is ideological hegemony. Here, the state, through the dissemination of ideas attempts to persuade the world of states that its own ideology is universal, the norm and serving everyone's interests. A successful hegemony would be one where the ideas of the dominant state become a truly universal, international phenomenon. If an ideology is seen to exploit then it has failed to be truly hegemonic. The second tool is domination through force or coercion. Here a state's ideology is forced upon others using superior economic, political or military power. Gramsci claims that supremacy maintained by domination is comparatively weaker than supremacy maintained by hegemony. He argues that the former usually occurs when the latter has failed. "To mask the lack of consensus the representatives of power always proclaim grand moral principles to justify the use of force."²⁰

In reality, despite Fukuyama's 'End of Ideology' thesis, no state or group of states has been able to create a pure world hegemony. Much of the compliance to, for example, American hegemony, has occurred because of what Gramsci calls a 'Passive Revolution'. These were "societies which had so to speak imported or had thrust upon them aspects of a new order created abroad, without the old order having been

²⁰ Augelli, E. & Murphy C.N., 'Gramsci and International Relations: A General Perspective and Example From Recent US Policy Toward the Third World', in Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations, Gill, S. (ed), (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1993), p.128

displaced.”²¹ This would perhaps explain the fragility of the American-Iranian relationship, which dramatically disintegrated after the revolution. Whilst Iran under the Shah took on many aspects of American ideology, the old order was not completely displaced. America had not created a true hegemony in Iran, which meant significant and dangerous opposition to the American ‘way’ remained. Worryingly for the US, similar tensions still exist in other parts of the Middle East, such as Saudi Arabia. Here the elite have been successfully co-opted, but many of the people remain sceptical or even resentful of America’s influence.

Despite the failings of the hegemonic aspects of American foreign policy, the US does provide the most recent and most comprehensive example of the process. There are various factors and circumstances that have enabled the US to create and maintain its world order. The first is America’s economic dominance following the war, which undoubtedly provided another significant basis for its hegemony. Gramsci believed there was a reciprocal relationship between the base and superstructure and therefore argued that both were needed to achieve hegemony. “In industrial societies only social groups performing an essential role in the mode of production can become hegemonic ... This essential role in the world of production is what first confers prestige on a leading social group and makes its dominant social and political role acceptable to others.”²² The reliance of much of the world on American aid for economic recovery after the war catapulted America into this prestigious position. Noam Chomsky agrees saying: “The United States emerged from the war with about 50% of the world’s wealth and an incomparable position of security. It was in a position of global power with few, if any, parallels in history.”²³

Economic power is one thing, but according to Gramsci not enough to achieve hegemony. Successful dissemination of the ideology so that the recipients believe in its universal benefit is essential. According to Gramsci, intellectuals play a very important role in this task. They help to convince people that, as Gramsci puts it: “the ‘rational’ is actively and actually real.”²⁴ American intellectuals have played a significant part in producing economic, political and philosophical theories whose dissemination has gone

²¹ Cox, R.W., ‘Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations: an Essay in Method’, p.54

²² *Ibid*, p.130

²³ Chomsky, N., ‘Israel’s Role in US Foreign Policy’, in Lackman, Z. & Beinlin, J. (eds), Intifada: the Palestinian Uprising V. Israeli Occupation, (South End Press, Boston, 1989), pp.256

²⁴ Gramsci, A. in A Gramsci Reader, David Forgacs (ed), p.193

a long way in making the world accept American ideas of liberal democracy, capitalism and universal rights as the norm. Adam Smith, Huntington, Rousseau and Fukuyama are such examples.

Another tool of the potential hegemon and one that America has certainly used to considerable effect is international organisations. Robert Cox gives five features of international organisations which express their hegemonic role:

“(1) they embody the rules which facilitate the expansion of hegemonic world orders; (2) they are themselves the product of the hegemonic world order; (3) they ideologically legitimate the norms of the world order; (4) they co-opt the elites from the peripheral countries and (5) they absorb counter-hegemonic ideas.”²⁵

Take the UN as an example. Although “all the member states – large and small, rich and poor, with differing political views and social systems – have a voice and vote,”²⁶ UN rules, charters and resolutions of the UN tend to embody the American ‘way’. The organisation of the UN means that any decision or resolution gives the appearance of consensus, but in fact power and influence is heavily slanted in favour of the Security Council, which includes America and other allies such as the United Kingdom and France. Huntington agrees, saying: “Decisions made at the UN Security Council or the International Monetary Fund that reflect the interests of the West are presented to the world as reflecting the desires of the world community. The very phrase ‘world community’ has become the euphemistic collective noun to give global legitimacy to actions reflecting the interests of the United States and other Western powers.”²⁷ The UN is also heavily reliant on America’s economic and military superiority, giving America further influence. The recent fiasco with America’s failure to pay dues of over one billion US dollars to the UN unless certain conditions were met is one example of this influence being put into practice.

Economic organisations such as the IMF and the World Bank are particularly useful to America. In the case of the IMF, states are brought into the fold and helped to develop, but only on the terms of the dominant world order. In other words, loans are only

²⁵ Cox, R.W., ‘Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations: an Essay in Method’, p.62

²⁶ ‘How the UN works’, (27 November 2001), [www.un.org/Overview.brief]

²⁷ Huntington, S.P., ‘The Clash of Civilisations’, *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 72, no. 3, (1993), p.39

granted if reforms are made to bring the state's economy closer to the American model. Direct manipulation by America of international organisations in pursuit of hegemony is not uncommon. For example, the US consistently objects to the IMF granting assistance to Iran because Iran is seen to be against America's world order. Despite support for Iran from the rest of the world, the US has also vetoed Iran's application to the WTO for the last five years, keeping them "out in the cold."²⁸

To maintain a hegemony, economic development is crucial. For a world order to be seen to have succeeded by its adherents, economic development must occur. Otherwise it will no longer be seen as in the universal interest and consensus will break down. This may go some way to explaining the failure of the Soviet Union's hegemonic project. After the Cold War the American hegemonic attempt benefited greatly from the perceived success of the free market economy. Agnew and Corbridge describe this period as "the hegemony of 'transnational liberalism'" and comment that "a new ideology of the market (and market access) [was] being embedded in and reproduced by a powerful constituency of liberal states, international institutions, and what might be called the 'circuits of capital' themselves. Much of the world was brought into the world market economy, or at least aspired to join in."²⁹ Often the opposition to America's world order is from those who are not benefiting economically; those, such as Iran, who have been excluded from the system and those whose economies, for whatever reason, are failing and are unable to 'join in'. Therefore the main opposition to America's hegemony comes largely from the third world, not economically successful European or East Asian states.

In these cases, the other tool for achieving supremacy is needed: domination. Augelli and Murphy say: "Gramsci sees the supremacy of a corporate actor as based on hegemony over allies within the historic bloc and domination, either by force or fraud, of those social groups outside the alliance."³⁰ American economic sanctions on Iran, the Iran and Libya Sanctions Act and the promulgation of Iran as a global menace are all examples of this dominance of a state outside the alliance. These policies are made

²⁸ Doole, C., 'US Blocks Iran WTO Application', *BBC News*, (9 May 2001), [www.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/world/middle_east/newsid_1320000/1320334]

²⁹ Baylis, J. & Smith, S. (eds), *The Globalization of World Politics*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1998), p.377

³⁰ Augelli E. & Murphy, C.N., 'Gramsci and International Relations: A General Perspective and Example From Recent US Policy Toward The Third World', p.133

toward Iran because America sees Iran as outside and a challenge to its ideological basis.

1.4 The Washington Policy Monopoly

Chapter 4 applies Gramsci's ideas on hegemony in a different respect: in respect of the American foreign policy making process. Part of the reason why Iran is viewed so negatively in the US is the lack of accurate information about and remarkable absence of any significant debate on Iran within Washington. One way of understanding this is the existence of a Gramscian style hegemony over policy. Despite the fact that America's policy on Iran has attracted much criticism from Iran, the rest of the world and a minority in Washington, the policy consensus remains largely unchallenged and widely accepted. Negative perceptions of Iran within the policy-making process have become firmly entrenched. Chapter 4 explores the notion that this is largely because of a highly successful Gramscian 'war of position'. Intellectuals (Gramsci's definition) such as interest groups, individual politicians, government departments and the media have actively encouraged and maintained a certain perception of Iran to the detriment of debate and discussion. Challenges to the American policy consensus do exist from within Iran and also from within Washington. These however, are weak and have limited effect, further supporting the idea of a remarkable policy monopoly.

1.5 The Case Study

A case study on the events after the September 11th attacks on the US follows in chapter 5. This is designed to demonstrate how the ideological aspects of the relationship operate within a contemporary example. More specifically it shows how the strength of the ideological conflict thwarted another key opportunity for improvement in relations.

1.6 Methodology

This thesis was planned following considerable background reading, particularly on Gramsci and the other theorists. It was broken down into subject areas, which were then focused on in turn: terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, regional relations, human rights, the Revolution, the US foreign policy process, the Israeli Lobby, Track 2, Khatami and September 11th.

Primary information on Iranian and American foreign policy was gathered from a number of sources. The internet provided the necessary US government reports, statements and testimonies, most usefully from the State Department, the Defence Department and Congress. Speeches from the Iranian government, particularly by Khatami and Khamenai, were obtained from the BBC Summary of World Broadcasts. In March 2002, during a research trip to Washington and New York, a number of former US officials, academics and journalists were interviewed. The most useful of these was Dr Gary Sick from Columbia University. Most of the interviews were recorded. These interviews were supplemented by a series of interviews carried out by the BBC correspondent in Washington, Stephen Sackur (broadcast on BBC Radio 4) and the transcripts and video recordings of lectures given by Robert Pelletreau and Gary Sick, amongst others.

Research into US concerns with recent Iranian behaviour concentrated primarily on American academics and commentators, such as Sick, Fuller, Zunes, Morton, Cordesman, Eisenstadt and Clawson. Americans were chosen to counter Americans to make the arguments more credible. There was a concern that Iranian commentators would be too open to bias.

Finally all the different subject areas were brought together and the thesis was completed with a case study and conclusion.

CHAPTER 2: IRANIAN FOREIGN POLICY ANALYSED

2. IRANIAN FOREIGN POLICY ANALYSED

2.1 Iran as a patron of international terrorism

America's case against Iran is explicit and uncompromising. In their 'Patterns of Global Terrorism Report 2000', the US State Department stated: "Despite domestic political changes that suggest evolution towards a more moderate policy, Iran remained the primary state sponsor of terrorism."³¹ Over the last twenty years America has accused Iran of involvement in numerous significant terrorist attacks, political assassinations and of supporting Islamic opposition groups abroad. These accusations are aimed at the highest level in Tehran because Washington claims the Iranian government is complicit and even directs terrorist policies. The US Congress in 'the Iran and Libya Sanctions Act of 1996' accuses the Government of Iran of using "its diplomatic facilities and quasi-governmental institutions outside of Iran to promote acts of international terrorism."³² During the Rafsanjani presidency, the thought amongst many experts, including the American academic and former government official, Anthony Cordesman, was that there were clear links between "Iran's acts of terrorism and support of extremist groups and the Iranian Supreme Council for National Security."³³ This Council includes the supreme leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, the President and the head of Iran's secret services. More recently, the Patterns of Global Terrorism Report 2000 limits criticism to certain elements of the Tehran government: "Its Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS) continued to be involved in the planning and execution of terrorist acts and continued to support a variety of groups that use terrorism to pursue their goals."³⁴

Since the bombing of the US marine barracks in Beirut in 1983 America has linked Iran to most major international terrorist incidents, including the 1994 attack against a Jewish centre in Buenos Aires and the Khobar Towers bombing in Saudi Arabia in 1996. Adam Tarock argues that "ever since the Iranian revolution, in the political vocabulary of US officials and therefore hence in the media, the name of Iran has

³¹ US State Department, Patterns of Global Terrorism 2000, (April 2000), [www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/pgtrpt/2000/index.cfm]

³² 'Iran and Libya Sanctions Act of 1996' in Congressional Record, [wais.access.gpo.gov]

³³ Cordesman, A. & Hashim, A., Iran: Dilemmas of Dual Containment, (Westview, Oxford, 1997), p.148

³⁴ US State Department, Patterns of Global Terrorism 2000

become synonymous with terrorism.”³⁵ The US State Department claims that “Iran was involved in forty five significant terrorist incidents in 1987, twenty four incidents in 1989, ten in 1990, five in 1991, twenty in 1992, six in 1993, six in 1994 and at least six in 1995.”³⁶ The Patterns of Global Terrorism Reports over the last few years have continued to accuse Iran of assassinating political dissidents, sponsoring groups opposing Israel and having links with terrorist groups in the wider world.

If US accusations are taken as incontrovertible then it would seem that Iran deserves its reputation and position as the world’s primary state sponsor of terrorism. However the American position is highly contentious. Not only do many in Iran refute the American stance, but many American academics, European governments and other US allies also argue that the American position is exaggerated, outdated and too heavily reliant on Israeli intelligence. Perpetual demonisation and strong rhetoric from both sides has meant US policy has never been based on a rational analysis of Iran’s involvement in terrorism. This has been particularly damaging because, as Gary Sick, former member of the US National Security Council between 1976 and 1981, remarks, “US policy objectives were defined in the broadest possible terms, with no benchmarks and few specific examples.”³⁷ This left observers “free to interpret the policy according to their own understanding and on the basis of highly selective evidence.”³⁸ Therefore perceptions of Iran’s foreign policy have been and remain incredibly subjective.

2.1.1 Dissident assassination

American figures are damaging; the US State Department points to eight assassinations outside of Iran in 1996 and thirteen in 1997.³⁹ The 1998 Patterns of Global Terrorism Report stated that anti-dissident assassinations had declined, but mentions four murders in Tajikistan and Pakistan that were potentially carried out by Iranian intelligence agents.⁴⁰

³⁵ Tarock, A., ‘US-Iran Relations: heading for confrontation?’, Third World Quarterly, vol. 17 (1996), p.153

³⁶ Cordesman, A. & Hashim, A., Iran: Dilemmas of Dual Containment, p.147

³⁷ Sick, G., ‘Rethinking Dual Containment’, Survival, vol. 40, no. 1, (1998), p.13

³⁸ *Ibid*, p.13

³⁹ US State Department, Patterns of Global Terrorism 1996, (April 1997), [www.state.gov/www/global/terrorism/1996Report/overview] & Patterns of Global Terrorism 1997, (April 1998), [www.state.gov/www/global/terrorism/1997Report]

⁴⁰ US State Department, Patterns of Global Terrorism 1998, (April 1999), [www.state.gov/www/global/terrorism/1998Report/sponsor]

Figures alone however do not provide sufficient evidence. This Iranian policy must be put into perspective. Firstly, since 1993, there have been no high profile assassinations of opposition leaders and nor have there been any assassinations in Europe. The main area where extra-territorial assassinations of opponents is still prevalent is in northern Iraq against the Mujahedin-e-Khalq (MEK).

This leads to the more significant qualification of US figures, which is that Iran's actions and motivations are similar to others in the region, including Israel. The MEK is a US designated terrorist group and violently opposes the Iranian regime, carrying out numerous attacks against government and civilian targets. In 1997 alone the MEK claimed to have conducted 294 operations inside Iran and in 2000, the organisation admitted responsibility for six mortar attacks on civilian government and military buildings in Tehran.⁴¹ The Iranian government's response has been a campaign of targeted assassination and armed raids against the MEK. Just like the Israelis, Iran justifies this course of action by arguing it is an issue of national security. In fact Gary Sick points out that "Israel's record of extra-territorial assassinations and kidnappings is far more extensive than Iran's, even if all the cases attributed by the media to Iran are true."⁴² It is simply not credible for the US to persist in criticising an Iranian policy of killing terrorists, without a similar condemnation of Israel and others in the region. America's "War on Terrorism" since the September attacks has made this position all the more absurd.

2.1.2 Support for terrorist groups (excluding Israeli opposition)

The US accuses Iran of supporting terrorist groups all over the world. The State Department reports consistently accuse Iran of providing a safehaven for the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) operating in Turkey. The 1996 report also claims Iran sponsored a local Shi'ite group that was found to be planning to overthrow the royal family in Bahrain.⁴³ Since 1997 the report has commented on Algerian government allegation that Iran trains and supplies Algerian Islamic terrorists. Although acknowledging that levels had lowered, the 2000 report refers to military, financial and training links with

⁴¹ See US State Department, Patterns of Global Terrorism 2000 and Sick, G., 'Rethinking Dual Containment', p.14

⁴² Sick, G., 'Rethinking Dual Containment', p.13

⁴³ US State Department, Patterns of Global Terrorism 1996

nine US designated terrorist groups operating in Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkey, Europe and other parts of the Middle East.⁴⁴

Furthermore, recently members of Saudi Hezbollah have been indicted by the US for carrying out the 1996 bombing of the Khobar Towers, which killed nineteen US servicemen and injured five hundred others. Tehran has been accused of directing the operation. The indictment claims: "these Hizballah organizations were inspired, supported and directed by elements of the Iranian government."⁴⁵ An article in the New Yorker in May 2001 states that the FBI believes some Iranian intelligence officials should also be indicted.⁴⁶

These accusations of broad support for terrorism are dubious and exaggerated. For example the allegation of PKK safehavens exists on the tenuous basis that one leading member of the PKK, the brother of Ocalan, lived in Iran for a while during that year.⁴⁷ Fuller claims that "Iran's role in other terrorist incidents in the region, especially since the early 1990s, has actually been minimal."⁴⁸ Although links between Iran and many Islamic extremist movements are numerous, it is doubtful that these links are any stronger than other states in the world, including Saudi Arabia and the United States itself. Saudi Arabia has known links with many extremist Sunni groups, especially in Central Asia. Until very recently, the Saudis were open supporters of the Taliban and their infiltration of the Central Asia Republics caused Iran to step up its own involvement in the region to counter Saudi influence. Furthermore, as the American academic, Stephen Zunes points out, "the history of US support for terrorist groups in Latin America and elsewhere lends little credibility to Washington's anti-terrorist crusade against Iran."⁴⁹

When considering allegations of support for Islamic groups in the region, America must be aware that it is very useful for authoritarian regimes, such as the Gulf monarchies,

⁴⁴ US State Department, Patterns of Global Terrorism 2000

⁴⁵ US District Court Eastern District of Virginia Alexandria Division, Criminal No. 01-288-A Indictment, (June 2001)

⁴⁶ Kohr, H., Testimony of Howard A. Kohr (AIPAC) Before the House International Relations Committee Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia, (9 May 2001), [www.house.gov/international_relations/kohr0509]

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p.56

⁴⁸ Fuller, G., 'Repairing US-Iranian Relations'

⁴⁹ Zunes, S., 'In Focus: Time for Détente'

Egypt and Algeria, to blame external influences, such as Iran, for the existence of domestic opposition. This opposition is usually home grown and would undoubtedly still exist without an Islamic Iran. Morton goes further claiming that: "the allegation that Iran supported terrorist groups in North Africa and South and Central Asia is not supported by any evidence at all."⁵⁰

The issue of responsibility for the Khobar Towers bombing is also highly contestable. The indictment's allegations of inspiration, support and direction from 'elements' in the Iranian government are vague and ambiguous. It is difficult to ascertain whether this is based on the belief that the Iranian government conceived, planned and ordered the bombing or whether this is based on a more tenuous ideological link. It is true that Hezbollah is Shi'ite organisation and it is also the case that Iran has traditional links with the Lebanese Hezbollah. However this does not prove that Tehran was directly responsible for the bombing. The indictment is inviting the reader to draw an inference that the Iranian government is responsible but the evidence simply does not prove this unequivocally. By 1996 Iran was very much following a more pragmatic line towards its Gulf neighbours and therefore incitement and encouragement of groups like Saudi Hezbollah would have been minimal. Even Iran's involvement in Lebanon had dramatically declined.

2.1.3 Iran's behaviour put into perspective

Whereas it is impossible to know exact Iranian involvement in Islamic extremism and terrorism, it is clear that firstly, this involvement has dramatically declined during the last decade and secondly, Iran has no worse a track record than many other states in the region. The fact that Iran remains labelled as the world premier state sponsor of terrorism has less to do with realities and much more to do with politics. If American policy makers analysed the policies of other states in the region, such as Israel and Saudi Arabia, with the same criteria it puts on Iran, they would find it far more difficult to condemn Iran.

⁵⁰ Morton, E., Thinking Beyond the Stalemate in US-Iranian Relations: Volume 2 – Issues and Analysis, p.56

Analysis of Iranian behaviour has been further complicated by the methodology of the State Department's Patterns Global Terrorism Reports. This is a significant problem because these Reports not only reflect the views of the State Department but they also have a considerable influence on the opinions of Congress, as well as on how the media presents Iran to the American people. The main criticism arises because Iran is only compared to other state sponsors of terrorism; its behaviour is not considered in the wider perspective of world terrorism as a whole. When considered thus, by the State Department's own definitions, Iran has not been involved in any major terrorist incident since the election of Khatami. Out of the one hundred and sixty major incidents in 1999 and one hundred and thirty-nine in 2000 none were associated with Iran.⁵¹ Despite this, the wording of the report ('the number one state sponsor of terrorism') means that the perception emerges of Iran as the main cause of international terrorism. In fact multinational groups, such as al-Qaeda, are a far greater threat.

The image of Iran as a prolific and widespread state sponsor of terrorism is not one based on reliable evidence, but one based on politicised and contestable information. Iran's image was irreparably damaged by its provocative policies during the 1980s and because of a continuing atmosphere of mistrust and misunderstanding has been unable to shed this perception. The strength of the ideological conflict between America and Iran has kept the idea of Iran as a menacing and prolific sponsor of international terrorism alive.

2.2 Opposition to Israel

The second main criticism of Iranian policy is its support for terrorist groups who violently oppose Israel and Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands and, until recently, Lebanon. The Global Terrorism Reports over the last few years have consistently accused Iran of providing money, weapons and training to groups such as HAMAS, Lebanese Hizballah and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ). Even after the election of the more moderate President Khatami in 1997, this policy continued unabated. Not only does Iran allegedly provide funds and supplies but Tehran also provides moral support. Iran encourages co-operation between all groups wishing to disrupt the peace process and sees itself as the mentor. For example, in Autumn 1997, a conference of

⁵¹ Morton, E., Thinking Beyond the Stalemate in US-Iranian Relations: Volume 2 – Issues and Analysis, p.55

'Liberation Movements' was held in Tehran, attended by HAMAS, Lebanese Hezbollah, the PIJ and the Egyptian al Gama'at al Islamiya. Allegedly participants discussed "the jihad, establishing greater co-ordination between certain groups, and an increase in support for some groups."⁵² Another similar conference was held in April 2001.

In the 1999 report, the US recognised the efforts of the Reformist movement in Iranian politics and narrowed its criticism to 'certain state institutions' such as MOIS and the Revolutionary Guards Corps. However the US maintained that Iran was still the most active state sponsor of terrorism. This was largely because the links with the anti-Israeli movement remained strong. In view of the revival of the peace process after the election of the Israeli Prime Minister Barak, Iran's policies were viewed all the more negatively.

The report states:

"Iran's involvement in terrorist-related activities remained focused on support for groups opposed to Israel and peace between Israel and its neighbours ... Iran has long provided Lebanese Hizballah and the Palestinian rejectionist groups – notably HAMAS, the Palestine Islamic Jihad and Ahmad Jibril's PFLP-GC – with varying amounts of funding, safehaven, training and weapons. This activity continued at its already high levels following the Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon in May and during the intifada in the fall. Iran continued to encourage Hizballah and the Palestinian groups to co-ordinate their planning and to escalate their activities against Israel."⁵³

Again this Iranian policy must be put into perspective. During the 1980s, Iran's policy in Lebanon was blatant and unapologetic.⁵⁴ The government placed Revolutionary Guards on Lebanese territory to train and support the Shia militia fighting Israeli occupation. Links between Hizballah and the Iranian embassy in Syria were well documented and explicit. It was well known that Iran had considerable influence over the fate of many of the western hostages taken by Hizballah during the 1980s. What is

⁵² *Ibid*

⁵³ US State Department, Patterns of Global Terrorism 2000

⁵⁴ Hitti, N., 'Lebanon in Iran's Foreign Policy: Opportunities and Constraints', Amirahmadi, H. & Entessar, N. (eds), Iran and the Arab World, (MacMillan, Basingstoke, 1993), pp.180-195

not clear is how many incidents were actually directed and ordered by Tehran. There is no evidence to say, for example, that the Iranian regime ordered the US marine bombing in Beirut in 1983 or any of the many attacks inside Israel. Having said that, Tehran's failure to condemn and prevent such attacks clearly amounts to tacit approval.

There were clear policy changes during the 1990s that must be acknowledged. Revolutionary Guards were removed from Lebanon. Although financial and arms support for groups such as Hizbollah, HAMAS and PIJ continues, many analysts agree that the level has dramatically decreased.⁵⁵ The Iranian government, since the election of Khatami, has been at pains to condemn all forms of terrorism. In his book published in 1997, Khatami said of terrorism: "We have always been against terrorism, especially state-sponsored terrorism. We should join hands to fight terrorism."⁵⁶ This is consistent with the original ideas on exporting the revolution, which, according to Khomeini was meant to be done by example, not by force and interference.

When considering Iranian policy, America must be careful not to use Iranian rhetoric, such as calls for 'death to Israel', as evidence to support allegations of terrorism. Whilst Iran remains firmly opposed to Israel and the peace process because they see it as biased and unrepresentative of the Palestinian position, this does not mean they will resist the process violently. Again in Khatami's speech to CNN he said: "We have declared our opposition to the Middle East peace process because we believe it will not succeed. At the same time, we have clearly said that we don't intend to impose our views on others or to stand in their way."⁵⁷ In other words, Iran would accept any agreement supported by the Palestinians. In the meantime, Iran sees its support for Palestinian resistance groups as part of a war against Israel, not as support for terrorism, the definition of which is highly debatable. Fuller of the RAND Corporation believes that "ugly as terrorism is, it must be seen as a form of war itself, and those wars must be seen in the perspective of the broad regional military struggle, with different sides employing different weapons, B-52's, tanks, naval aircrafts, guerrilla warfare, and terrorism, with victims on all sides."⁵⁸ Iran's support for HAMAS or PIJ can be seen as part of an

⁵⁵ See Fuller, G., 'Repairing US-Iranian Relations', Sick, G., 'Rethinking Dual Containment', p.16 & Zunes, S., 'In Focus: Time for Détente', *Foreign Policy In Focus*, vol. 4, no. 28 (1999), [www.igc.org/infocus/briefs/vol4/v4n28iran]

⁵⁶ Khatami, M., *Hope and Challenge: Our President Speaks*, (Binghamton University, New York, 1997), p.96

⁵⁷ Sick, G., 'Rethinking Dual Containment', p.21

⁵⁸ Fuller, G., 'Repairing US-Iranian Relations'

armed conflict between two states and as such, it is not uncommon for different sides in a war to be supported by exterior states.

Moral and financial support for Palestinian resistance groups has been stepped up since the *intifada* and statements from both factions of the Iranian government have become more antagonistic. In December 2000, Khatami said of Israeli policy in the occupied territories: "the massacre of innocent people, rendering the Muslim Palestinians homeless and usurpation of the Al-Aqsa Mosque are an insult to all Muslim nations."⁵⁹ and his moderate foreign minister, Kharrazi called for Israeli officials to be tried for war crimes.⁶⁰ However, whilst the rhetoric emanating from Tehran is considerably harsher, there are other countries in the region who have closer links with Palestinian groups and also provide considerable funds. For example, the ex-state department official and political analyst, Elaine Morton points out: "While Iran gives financial support to groups like Hizbollah, HAMAS, the PIJ, and the PFLP-GC, it is Syria that gives these groups political direction and support."⁶¹ Iran is able to voice such criticism of Israel because, unlike many Arab states, they are not directly involved in the dispute; they do not have to take into account the ramifications on settlement negotiations or border security.

As with all Iranian foreign policy decisions there is much ambiguity about the extent of the involvement of various government factions. The Palestinian case is a perfect example. Whereas the more ideological, conservative factions in government, such as the Supreme Leader, vehemently attack Israel and American support for Israel and consistently call for the funding of Hizbollah, other elements in the government are trying to be more co-operative. As the situation in Israel and the Occupied Territories worsens, it is more difficult for the reformist elements to challenge the hardliners. Despite this, after the Israelis discovered that Iran had attempted to send arms to the Palestinians, the reformist dominated parliament demanded an investigation to discover who had authorised the shipment. It clearly did not represent a consensual government position. Likewise, whilst Supreme Leader, Khamenai was condemning the Saudi peace initiative during Friday prayers, Iran's foreign minister, Kamal Kharrazi

⁵⁹ 'Iran's Khatami urges massive turnout on Quds Day', BBC Monitoring Service, (21st December 2000), [globalarchive.ft.com]

⁶⁰ Morton, E., Thinking Beyond the Stalemate in US-Iranian Relations: Volume 2 – Issues and Analysis, (The Atlantic Council of the United States, Washington, July 2001), [www.acus.org/publications/occasionalpapers], p.49

described it as positive.⁶² During the recent Israeli re-occupation of the West Bank, Hizbollah activity on Israel's northern border threatened to escalate the conflict. Far from encouraging Hizbollah's actions, Kharrazi went to Lebanon to urge Hizbollah to exercise 'self restraint'.⁶³ Simply labelling Iran as a state sponsor of terrorism does not take into account that there are many high up within government that strongly resist the policies of a hard line minority.

2.3 Iran as a pursuer of weapons of mass destruction

The issue cited most often as America's prime concern and the main justification for sanctions against Iran is Iran's supposed clandestine nuclear weapons program. Although the method and intensity of the program is disputed in America, Washington is convinced of Iran's intention to gain nuclear capability and has strong objections. Apart from an objection on general non-proliferation grounds, America fears a nuclear Iran would have a destabilising impact on the region and restrict America's options both militarily and politically in the event of a crisis. Washington's particular concern is Israel, of which Iran is openly opposed. A nuclear Iran would shift the balance of power away from America and Israel, giving Iran a substantially stronger position in the region. American and Israeli intelligence have given varying predictions of when Iran would have nuclear capability. Some reports predicted 2000, others longer. 2000 has now passed and the consensus is that Iran is still years away.⁶⁴ However if Iran is able to obtain weapons grade fissile material from outside Iran, possibly from the former Soviet Union, then some experts believe Iran could build some kind of nuclear weapon within nine to thirty-six months.⁶⁵

Many of Washington's policies towards Iran are directed at trying to prevent it from obtaining nuclear technology or equipment, even for a civilian nuclear energy program. The American's fear Iran will develop its nuclear capability under the cover of its civilian program. Their policy is twofold. Firstly US sanctions and vetoes on international organisations are designed to restrict the amount of money Iran has

⁶¹ *Ibid*, p.54

⁶² Dinmore, G., 'Violence reveals deep policy rifts', *The Financial Times*, (12 April 2002)

⁶³ Dinmore, G., 'Iran's centrists seek to break taboo of talk with US', (23 April 2002)

⁶⁴ Traynor, I., 'Kremlin's arms salesmen target US foes', *The Guardian*, (5 December 2000), [www.guardianunlimited.co.uk/russia/article/0,2763,406890,00]

available to pursue its nuclear program. Secondly the US applies considerable pressure on other countries not to supply any 'dual use' or missile technology and hardware to Iran. During the middle 90s this latter policy seemed successful, but now countries such as Russia, China and North Korea have resisted American pressure and have become Iran's major arms and (civilian) nuclear suppliers. Russia in particular, with its own declining nuclear program, has the expertise and economic incentive to be of considerable assistance to Iran. In 2000, Russia revoked a secret agreement, signed with the US in 1995, arguing that the benefits of arms trade with Iran far outweighed the potential costs imposed by America.⁶⁶ Russia is also determined to help the Iranians complete a nuclear energy plant at Bushehr.

There are two main contentions with respect to the American view of Iran's nuclear intentions. Firstly it is not absolutely clear that such a course is an intention or a priority for Iran. Secondly if such a determination does exist in Tehran, it is contestable that this would be a significant threat to American, regional and world security. There is no convincing evidence that Iran would use any nuclear capability in a threatening or aggressive manner.

The Americans argue that the Iranians have clear motivations to go nuclear. The main focus of the Islamic Republic of Iran's foreign policy has always been the promotion of an independent and self-sufficient Iran.⁶⁷ A nuclear capability would not only boost national pride but also decrease Iran's reliance on other countries for military supplies. The Iran-Iraq War of the 80s left Iran's military dangerously under equipped and supplied. In the last battles of the war, Iran is estimated to have lost 40 to 50% of its major ground force equipment, the navy suffered significant losses and Iran has been unable to effectively re-supply weapons and machinery supplied by the west during the time of Shah.⁶⁸ To re-equip effectively, Iran needs huge investment and supplies from abroad. Given Iran's economic situation and given the pressure America puts on countries not to supply Iran, some analysts believe Iran would prefer the nuclear

⁶⁵ Cordesman, A. & Hashim, A., *Iran: Dilemmas of Dual Containment*, p.306

⁶⁶ Traynor, I., 'Kremlin's arms salesmen target US foes'

⁶⁷ See Khatami, M., *Hope and Challenge: Our President Speaks*, pp.96-97 & 'Foreign Policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran: Issues and Stances', *Iranian Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 5, no. 3/4, pp.781-792

⁶⁸ Cordesman, A. & Hashim, A., *Iran: Dilemmas of Dual Containment*, p.313

option.⁶⁹ A nuclear capability would instantly boost defence to a level that would make costly rearmament of the military less of a priority. The US argues that for these reasons, even the pragmatists in the Iranian government, such as Khatami, would support a nuclear program. Michael Eisenstadt from the Washington Institute of International Affairs says of the Khatami faction: "While these men are pragmatists, they are also Persian nationalists, interested in building a strong Iran ... In this light, it seems plausible that Khatami and his entourage would support the acquisition of such weapons."⁷⁰

Washington also claims that the more Islamic elements in Tehran would also support a nuclear capability because it would enhance Iran's standing in the Islamic World and increase Iran's ability to influence regional issues. Eisenstadt claims: "Iran's clerical leaders believe that the Islamic Republic plays a key role in world affairs as the standard bearer of revolutionary Islam and the guardians of oppressed Muslims everywhere. Accordingly, they believe that the fate of the world-wide Islamic community depends on Iran's ability to transform into a military power that can defend and advance the interests of the community."⁷¹

Iran on the other hand resolutely denies any nuclear intention. The more pragmatic side argues that a nuclear program would not be in the national interest. It would severely damage attempts to gain international recognition and reputation and therefore access to global markets. Furthermore, with a struggling economy, Iran maintains that the funds are better spent elsewhere. The Iran-Iraq War, the large influx of refugees from Iraq, Azerbaijan and Afghanistan, a population explosion and foreign sanctions have left the Iranian economy in severe difficulties. For example, GDP per capita fell sharply from \$1630 in 1985 to \$1000 in 1992.⁷² Unemployment is also major problem, particularly amongst the disproportionately young population. It is estimated that: "the economy will have to generate 800,000 jobs per year to accommodate new entrants into the job

⁶⁹ See Eisenstadt, M., 'Living with a Nuclear Iran', *Survival*, vol. 41, no. 3 (1999), pp.124-148 and Cordesman, A. & Hashim, A., *Iran Under Khatami: a political, economic and military assessment*, ch. 13-14

⁷⁰ Eisenstadt, M., 'Living with a Nuclear Iran', p.131

⁷¹ *Ibid*, p.125

⁷² Shahabi, S. & Farhi, F. 'Security Consideration and Iranian Foreign Policy', *The Iranian Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 7, no. 1 (1995), p.97

market ... approximately 450,000 jobs beyond the economy's current job-creating capacity.”⁷³

Declared Iranian policy on weapons of mass destruction is the promotion of non-proliferation. Having experienced directly the suffering caused by biological and chemical weapons during the Iran-Iraq War, Tehran claims to be vehemently against their use or development, even proposing at one point a nuclear-free Middle East. Iran is a signatory of both the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and allows the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to regularly inspect its nuclear facilities. America dismisses the latter, arguing that these inspections are pre-arranged and are only of declared sites. However Iran has implied that it will sign the IAEA's Model Safeguards Protocol, allowing inspection of undeclared sites, if America stops interfering with the civilian program (which Iran is entitled to pursue under the terms of the NPT).⁷⁴

Numerous leaders in the Iranian government, past and present, have spoken out against nuclear proliferation, not only for the national interest but also for religious and moral reasons. Khomeini himself declared his opposition, arguing that they were indiscriminate and therefore contrary to Islam. This view still carries considerable weight in Tehran. Iran's foreign minister, Kharrazi said in September 1997: “The Islamic Republic of Iran, on the basis of Islamic beliefs, considers WMD inhumane and illegitimate.”⁷⁵

The second main contention to US claims is the extent to which a nuclear Iran would be a threat. Given that the priority for Iran seems to be economic recovery and therefore international respectability and regional stability, it would be counterproductive for Iran to break out of the NPT and CWC and go against its public stance of non-proliferation. What is more likely is that Iran will make some effort to increase levels of nuclear understanding and equipment, probably under cover of its civilian program, so that when a crisis arises, like Iraq declaring nuclear capability, Iran will be not be too far behind. Following his own investigations, Gary Sick believes: “Iran is probably

⁷³ Morton, E., Thinking Beyond the Stalemate in US-Iranian Relations: Volume 2 – Issues and Analysis, p.38

⁷⁴ Morton, E., ‘Thinking Beyond the Stalemate in US-Iranian Relations: Volume 1 – Policy Review’, (The Atlantic Council of the United States, Washington, May 2001), [www.acus.org/publications/policypapers], p.22

developing the underlying infrastructure that would permit it to mount a fully fledged nuclear-weapons programme at relatively short notice if it should find itself threatened by ... a direct nuclear threat. At the moment, this not a crash programme and is not given very high priority.”⁷⁶

There is no convincing evidence that Iran desires to use a nuclear capability for anything other than defence. In recent years there has been no suggestion of aggressive regional ambitions. In fact Iran’s regional policy has been the opposite: based on co-operation and the building and maintenance of stability. The emphasis of Iran’s foreign policy has always been on independence and territorial integrity but, as Khatami is quick to point out: “We will not interfere in the affairs of others ... we are in favour of extensive co-operation with our neighbours, with Muslims and with all independent countries.”⁷⁷ Iran has very real and justified defence concerns and therefore legitimate reasons for considering the nuclear option.

Regional realities makes it necessary for Iran to have a strong defence capability. Iran is surrounded by Iraq, which has already shown its propensity for unprovoked aggression, Afghanistan, which until very recently was under a hostile regime, harbouring hostile terrorist groups, Azerbaijan and Armenia who violently disputed their borders until 1994 and the United Arab Emirates who have laid claim to three Iranian islands in the Persian Gulf. Further afield, Iran’s relationship with Israel is very antagonistic and for the past decade there has been significant political unrest in Tajikistan. The Gulf countries to the south are protected by America’s nuclear umbrella. India and Pakistan have recently tested nuclear missiles and Israel also has a nuclear capability. The concept of non-proliferation in the region is already a farce.

Extensive militarisation in the region plus severe damage during the Iran-Iraq war has left Iran in a comparatively weak position. Iran has spent far less on arms than most of the region and has also been left out of security pacts, leaving it isolated and vulnerable. Whilst the Gulf states (excluding Iraq) spent about \$157 billion on their military forces between 1989 to 1992, the CIA estimated in 1992 that Iran was only spending \$2 billion

⁷⁵ Sick, G., ‘Rethinking Dual Containment’, p.17

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p.17

⁷⁷ Khatami, M., Hope and Challenge: Our President Speaks, p.97

annually on arms imports.⁷⁸ Some Iranian officials have implied that to have any hope of retaliating against such might, Iran must have a nuclear capacity. In 1993, Iran Defence Minister said: "Can our air force ... take on the Americans, or our navy take on the American navy? If we put all our country's budget into such a war we would have just burnt our money. The way to go about dealing with such a threat requires a different solution entirely."⁷⁹ In June 1998 Judiciary Chief Ayatollah Mohammad Yazdi stated: "we are living at [a] time when the United States supports Israel which has the biggest arsenals of the mass destruction and nuclear weapons [and] atomic power is needed in the world of Islam to create a balance in the region."⁸⁰

As Fuller points out, the threat of WMD comes not from the weapons themselves but the regime in control of them.⁸¹ Pragmatists such as Khatami have been consistent in their desire for a responsible foreign policy to promote stability, co-operation and recognition. However, to say that the threat is negligible because the government of Iran will not pursue aggressive regional policies is to ignore the powers of other groups in the regime. It is the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) that is reportedly in charge of Iran's chemical, biological and nuclear weapons programmes and missile forces.⁸² The commander of the IRGC allegedly voiced opposition to the government stance in a leaked meeting in April 1998: "Can we withstand America's threats and domineering attitude with a policy of détente? ... Will we be able to protect the Islamic Republic from international Zionism by signing conventions to ban proliferation of chemical and nuclear weapons?"⁸³ However not only is it very unlikely that the IRGC have a free reign over any nuclear weapons programme, reports suggest that the same proportion of the IRGC voted for Khatami in the 1997 election as the rest of the population. This would suggest that the IRGC are not the hard-line bastion they are made out to be. Furthermore, there is considerable precedence for such comments being leaked from the conservative establishment to embarrass and hinder moderate government policies. The Iran Contra Affair was exposed by Iranian conservative elements, angry at the deals being made with the US and in 1989 revolutionary ideologues used the Rushdie Affair to derail suspected secret negotiations with the

⁷⁸ Tarock, A., 'US-Iran Relations: heading for confrontation?', p.155

⁷⁹ Eisenstadt, M., 'Living with a Nuclear Iran', p.128

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, p.129

⁸¹ Fuller, G., 'Repairing US-Iranian Relations'

⁸² Eisenstadt, M., 'Living with a Nuclear Iran', p.130

US.⁸⁴ It is not inconceivable that threatening comments made with regard to the use of WMD are merely similar attempts to mar Khatami's reconciliation efforts. That they represent real Iranian intentions is highly dubious.

In short, if Iran is pursuing a nuclear programme, it is not a fast track programme with considerable finance. More likely is the scenario that Iran is keeping its options open, which, given regional circumstances, is not totally unexpected. If the region was to aspire to non-proliferation, if Iran was included in the various security pacts and if the US was to reduce its military presence in the region, it would never be in Iran's interests to take any nuclear programme to the next level.

2.4 Iran and the Region

The reason the US is so concerned about Iran gaining WMD or having close links with Islamic opposition groups stems from the belief that Iran has dangerous regional and ideological ambitions. The two main American interests in the region, oil production and the security of Israel, make this possibility particularly poignant. Since the post revolutionary policy of exporting the revolution, many of the secular states in the region and their US guardians have been considerably wary of Iran's intentions. Situations, such as the alleged support of thwarted coups in Bahrain in 1981 and 1996 and the disturbances during the annual *Hajj* in Saudi Arabia in the 80's, only confirmed to the world that Iran was seeking to undermine these western orientated, monarchical and secular states. If successful this would have had grave consequences for western oil interests. The governments of these Gulf and North African states were only too aware that serious tensions between secular and Islamic elements already existed amongst their populations. They feared that Iran would manipulate these to their own advantage.

As late as 1995 a report on US security strategy by the Office of the Secretary of Defence declared: "Iran harbours ambitions of establishing Iranian hegemony over the

⁸³ Eisenstadt, M., 'The Military Dimension', Clawson, P., Eisenstadt, M., Kanorsky, E. & Menashri, D., Iran Under Khatami: a Political, Economic and Military Assessment, (The Washington Institute for Near Eastern Policy, Washington, 1998), p.83

⁸⁴ Kurzman, C., 'Soft on Satan: Challenges for Iranian US Relations', Middle East Policy, vol. 6 (1998), p.65

Persian Gulf and expanding its influence over radical Islamist forces."⁸⁵ However, since the end of the Iran-Iraq War, most analysts and world governments have recognised that economic and social pressures have forced revolution-spreading to the bottom of the Iranian agenda. Reintegration into the international fold became essential to the sustainability of the Islamic Republic. It is primarily for this reason that in recent years, Iran has been promoting good relationships with its neighbours and striving for regional stability. Iran is also aware that by working with other states, it is able to undermine America's position in the region much more effectively. Not only can Tehran encourage anti American, nationalist sentiment, but the friendly approach removes one of the primary justifications for the Gulf's heavy reliance on American military protection. This new direction is potentially more threatening to US interests than Iran's previous behaviour. After all, a divided region is far easier to manipulate and rule over than a region that is co-operating towards regional economic, political and military strength and stability. Khatami restated this policy in a speech to the Iranian Majlis in March 2001: "We have no aggressive intentions towards anyone ... We have been also trying to promote and practise an active and conciliatory policy of détente which has made it very difficult to justify the presence of foreign forces in the Persian Gulf."⁸⁶

Evidence of Iran's positive contribution to world and regional interests comes in three main areas. Firstly Iran has been involved constructively in the solution of a number of conflicts, namely Afghanistan and Azerbaijan. Secondly Iran has made considerable efforts to improve relations with all its neighbours, entering into negotiations on many points of conflict. Finally developments in Iran's domestic politics have had a positive impact on the development of ideas of civil society and democratic principles in the region. Iran has the potential to become the first ever Islamic democracy and should be held up as a possible model for other Muslim states.

2.4.1 Involvement in Conflicts

The dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh in the early 90s was a huge security concern to Iran. Iran has good relations with Armenia and several

⁸⁵ Cordesman, A. & Hashim, A., Iran: Dilemmas of Dual Containment, p.125

resident Armenian communities. There is also a sizeable Azeri minority in the north west of Iran. The conflict threatened to spill over into Iran several times. Tehran therefore consistently made efforts to mediate between the two. The first ceasefire was negotiated in Tehran in March 1993. President Rafsanjani said at the time: "the Islamic Republic of Iran has, from the very start of tension between Azerbaijan and Armenia, initiated extensive efforts to prevent the fanning of differences and reach a peaceful solution. While always remaining on the sideline, we have called on the two countries to find political solutions to their differences and refrain from bloodshed and war."⁸⁷ Whilst it is true that Iran mainly supported Armenia against Azerbaijan, when Armenia's aggression became unacceptable, Iran appealed to the UN to condemn Armenia and even mobilised troops to deter them from attacking the Nakhichevan enclave.⁸⁸ Iran played a constructive role in maintaining the balance of power in the region and thereby helped bring about a viable ceasefire.

Similarly in Tajikistan Iran also played a part in the peace initiative. Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Education and Research of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Abbas Maleki claims: "the signing of the Tajikistan Peace Agreement in Tehran was a historical event and the result of constructive dialogue and contacts in which the Islamic Republic of Iran played a key role."⁸⁹

It is in Afghanistan however that Iran has been most involved. The criticism often levelled at Iran and the other states involved in Afghanistan's civil war was that their interference aggravated and prolonged the conflict. Iran initially supported only the Shi'ite Hazara minority in Afghanistan but after the government of Najibullah fell in 1992 and the Taliban emerged, Iran increased its support to all Persian speaking peoples, including the Sunni Tajiks and Uzbeks. Iran saw the 'Northern Alliance' as it was called, as crucial to prevent a US, Saudi and Pakistani backed, anti-Iranian government from gaining and maintaining power in Kabul. Tehran therefore helped the Northern Alliance with arms, financial and moral support.

⁸⁶ Khatami, 'Address to Majlis on government performance', BBC Summary of World Broadcasts ME/4095 MED/7, (15 March 2001)

⁸⁷ Rafsanjani, H.K. in 'Positions: Foreign Policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran: Issues and Stances', Iranian Journal of International Affairs, vol.5, no.3-4, (1993), p.791

⁸⁸ Cornell, S.E., 'Iran and the Caucasus', Middle East Policy, vol.5, no.4, (1998), p.61

⁸⁹ Maleki, A., 'The Islamic Republic of Iran's Foreign Policy: the View from Iran', The Iranian Journal of International Affairs, vol.7, no.4, (1996), p.752

Contrary to criticism, Iran's involvement in Afghanistan cannot be described as merely provocative and unconstructive. As it happened Tehran had legitimate reasons to oppose a Taliban government in Afghanistan. When the Taliban took Mazar-e-Sharif in 1998 thousands of civilian Shi'ites were massacred including seven Iranian diplomats. Iran mobilised its troops on the border. The Economist reported at the time: "far from apologising for the Shia massacre, the Taliban have been defiant, threatening to 'target Iranian cities' if attacked."⁹⁰ The Taliban also proceeded to provide safe havens for terrorist groups targeting Iran and went against a pledge to stop poppy production. The latter was detrimental to Iran's worsening drug associated problems. By the end of the century, eighty percent of the world's opium was cultivated in Afghanistan and most passed through Iran.⁹¹ Drug smuggling made gun culture prolific in many parts of eastern Iran and over the last twenty years three thousand members of the security forces have been killed trying to prevent the trade. The volume of drugs has also led to a very high addiction rate with over three million heroin addicts in Iran.⁹²

The continuing war in Afghanistan has also left a tremendous refugee burden on Iran, whose economy is already suffering. Iran has the largest refugee population in the world, which in 1998 stood at almost two million, the majority of which were Afghans.⁹³ It is clear that it was in Iran's national interest to resolve the situation in Afghanistan not prolong it. Through the UN's '6+2' committee and the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), Iran has consistently worked to do just that. Post September 11th and throughout the 'War on Terrorism', Iran's commitment to a stable Afghanistan has remained. Alongside the coalition, Tehran has been unwavering in its support for the establishment of a 'democratic broad-based government' in Kabul.⁹⁴ Iran was instrumental in getting an agreement on an interim government at the negotiations in Bonn. Far from merely backing the 'Northern Alliance', Iranian officials applied considerable pressure to get them to agree to a multi ethnic

⁹⁰ 'Afghanistan and Iran. War Cries', *The Economist*, (19 September 1998), [www.economist.com/archive/view.cgi]

⁹¹ Dinmore, G., 'UK minister in Tehran to sign pact on drugs', *The Financial Times*, (26 February 2001)

⁹² Rashid, A., *Taliban: Islam, Oil and the New Great Game in Central Asia*, (IB Tauris, London, 2000), p.203

⁹³ Rajaei, B., 'The Politics of Refugee Policy in Post-Revolutionary Iran', *Middle East Journal*, vol.54, no.1, (2000), p.46

⁹⁴ See for example 'Benevolent Neutrality', *The Economist*, (25th October 2001), [www.economist.com/PrinterFriendly.cfm?Story_ID=838326] & 'Mirdamadi Calls for Boost in Iran-Britain Parliamentary Ties', *Iran News Online*, (5 November 2001), [www.iran-news.com/asp/search_news.asp]

government.⁹⁵ At a conference in Tokyo held to discuss the reconstruction of Afghanistan, Iran pledged to give \$550 million over the next five years, more than any other third world country.⁹⁶ Even the US State Department seemed pleased with Iran's involvement, testifying in Congress that Iran was playing a constructive role in Afghanistan.

More recently the US Secretary of Defence, Donald Rumsfeld, accused Iran of allowing Al-Qaeda fighters to flee Afghanistan through Iran and there have also been reports that war lords formerly allied to Tehran has been attempting to undermine the new interim government in Kabul. However if such reports are genuine, then it is highly probably that rogue elements in the Iranian regime, such as some Revolutionary Guards, are to blame. Iran's official position remains supportive of US action against Al-Qaeda and of the Kabul Administration.

2.4.2 Relations with Neighbours

The increasingly pragmatic approach to foreign policy has culminated in the re-establishment of relations with Saudi Arabia, Russia, and other states on the Caspian and in the Persian Gulf. When Khatami was elected in 1997 one of his first moves was to make the promotion of good regional relations a foreign policy priority. At the eighth summit of the leadership of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) held in Tehran in December 1997, both factions in Iranian politics, represented by President Khatami and Supreme Leader Khamenai, used the opportunity to launch a conciliatory message to the other fifty five member states. Reassuring neighbouring states of Iran's lack of aggressive regional ambition, Khatami stated: "Internationally ... our civil society neither seeks to dominate others nor to submit to domination."⁹⁷ Khamenai reinforced this saying: "Iran poses no threat to any Islamic country."⁹⁸ During this conference crucial bilateral discussions took place on many points of conflict, opening the way for ever closer relations over the coming years.

⁹⁵ Dinmore, G., 'America's new enemy', *The Financial Times*, (1 February 2002)

⁹⁶ Swain, J. & Allen-Mills, T., 'Fanatics move on to training camps in Iran', *The Sunday Times*, (14 April 2002, p.27

⁹⁷ Ramazani, R.K., 'The Shifting Premise of Iran's Foreign Policy: Towards a Democratic Peace?', *Middle East Journal*, vol. 52, no. 2, (1998), p.183

⁹⁸ *Ibid*, p.184

Considerable regional difficulties do remain, such as the distribution of oil and gas rights in the Caspian, Iran's occupation of the Abu Musa and the Greater and Lesser Tunb islands claimed by the UAE and links between factions in Iran and the Hizbollah and other Shi'ite organisations. However Iran has shown considerable willing to negotiate and resolve all of these issues. Abbas Maleki, deputy foreign minister for education and research in Iran, states the Iranian position on the islands: "Dialogue without preconditions over the Tunb and Abu Musa islands was ... raised by Iran and Foreign Minister Velayati even paid a visit to the UAE ... We consider this problem to be resolvable through bilateral negotiations."⁹⁹

Iran traditionally does see itself as a major player in the region and seeks greater regional power. However, it does not necessarily follow that Iran wishes to completely dominate and subvert the whole region. Iran is a major player and has every right to expect that to be borne out in regional politics. There is no evidence to suggest that the relations Iran is building up both economically and militarily with other states is any more than just a desire on Iran's part to become involved and influential in the region once more. President Rafsanjani stated back in 1993: "We strongly deny the proposition that Iran has plans to become the region's superpower. A comparison of Iran's arms spending with that of other regional states reveals this ... Time and again we have displayed our seriousness in defending ourselves. However, we have no intention of invading our neighbours, and these countries should not fear attack from Iran."¹⁰⁰ The fact that the region seems to have begun the process of reconciliation with Iran is evidence that they have put the difficult time of the 80s and early 90s behind them. For the United States however, a regional reconciliation with Iran conflicts with its own interests in the region. Iran has been openly pushing for a US military withdrawal and has the potential to rival the US as the major regional economic and political influence. It is therefore hardly surprising that the US is desperate to perpetuate a negative and aggressive image of Iran in the region.

⁹⁹ Maleki, A., The Islamic Republic of Iran's Foreign Policy: the View From Iran, (24 February 2000), [www.salamiran.org/IranInfo/State/Government/Foreign/maleki.html]

¹⁰⁰ 'Foreign Policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran: Issues and Stances', Iranian Journal of International Affairs, vol. 5, no. 3/4, pp.783

2.5 Human Rights

The US concern over Iran's human rights record takes a low priority. It is often tacked onto the other concerns with little justification or evidence. Whereas much has been written about the first three accusations, human rights is merely touched on. It is true that conservative elements in Iran have attacked various areas of the press, including imprisoning journalists and opposition politicians. It is also true that Iran's governmental system could never be described as democratic in the western sense. Potential candidates are vetted by the Council of Guardians and only allowed to stand if they are considered suitable for Islamic government. The Council of Guardians, headed by the supreme leader, also vets potential laws, vetoing them if they are considered unIslamic. Having said that, after vetting, the president and parliament are directly elected by the people. The massive support for both President Khatami and the reformers in parliament in recent elections have given both a popular legitimacy that cannot be ignored by conservatives in the Council of Guardians or the judiciary. In no uncertain terms could Iran be described as a dictatorship or a totalitarian society. Although the press is sometimes stifled, new papers merely emerge. Considerable political debate remains and people talk politics freely. These democratic elements in Iran exist in stark contrast to other states in the region, such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the rest of the GCC.

Some of Iran's laws and punishments, particularly those based in Islam, such as public hanging, the law against adultery or the restrictive dress code for women are viewed by many in the West as against universal human rights. If applied to western standards, then this may be the case. However if compared to other countries in the region and in fact the world, Iran's human rights record suddenly becomes glowing. The US has willingly constructed relations with countries such as China, arguing that they can influence human rights more effectively with engagement not isolation. This argument could easily be applied to the case of Iran. As for the US criticism of Islamic law, this becomes farcical when one considers American alliances with Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states.

CHAPTER 3: THE CULTURAL AND IDEOLOGICAL CONFLICT

3. THE CULTURAL AND IDEOLOGICAL CONFLICT

The perception of Iran painted in chapter 2 is a far cry from the one painted in the US, where Iran is viewed as an irrational rogue state desperate to empower Muslims by violently and ideologically attacking the western world. Opinions on Iranian behaviour are clearly heavily subjective, undermining the idea that US policy towards Iran is based solely on Realism. To understand the current relationship, it is crucial to examine how and why this perception of Iran has occurred and what effect this perception has had on policy.

Since American involvement in Iran after the Second World War a series of grievances on both sides have aggravated relations. These grievances have in turn been aggravated by both country's ideological and historical perspectives. For example, Iran's past has given rise to a deep suspicion of Great Powers and a determination to protect their independence. America, meanwhile, has developed a superpower mentality. Their consequent sense of cultural, economic and political superiority is resented by a suspicious and proud Iran.

The difficulties in the relationship cannot however, be understood by merely listing both sides' sets of historical grievances. Conflicts and disputes between states are an everyday occurrence and are reconciled over time. The significant grievances in the American Iranian case occurred in the past. There is a new generation growing up with no memory of the Revolution, the hostage crisis, the 1953 coup or the Shah. Why, therefore are Iran and American unable to discuss and settle their differences? The failure of rapprochement is not notable in itself but the total absence of any such process is remarkable. This can be explained by the existence of a lengthy and deep-rooted process of ideological antagonism and demonisation, which has prevented either side from compromising. Over time the idea of Iran and America as representing competing and opposing hegemonies or world views has been constructed and become entrenched.

3.1 The Origins of Iran's Animosity

The origins of Iran's animosity towards America lie in its own historical ideological basis. Iran has a history of strength and power. Since the early days of the Persian

Empire, Iran has ruled over a number of empires, the last being the Safavid Empire four hundred years ago. Since then Iran has struggled to maintain its independence against the growing strength of Europe and the US. Slowly but surely economic concessions were made to European business, such as the Reuter's Concession of 1872 and Iran was divided into spheres of influence by Russia and Britain in an agreement in 1907. When Reza Khan, as he was then called, emerged on the scene he was feted as the man who would restore Iran's independence and national pride. Reza Shah's policy of modernisation and westernisation however lost him his nationalist credentials and there was little opposition to his removal by the Allies in 1941. In 1941 the Allies invaded Iran, capturing it in just a few days. Iran's national army was humiliated and Iran took another blow to its national pride. The Shah's son Muhammad Reza was placed on the throne by the Allies and they left leaving behind a legacy of dependence that Muhammad Reza Shah found difficult to throw off. Suspicions and resentment of the influence of Great Powers and a desire to be independent and powerful once more is firmly etched onto the Iranian mindset. It is this mindset that remained when America appeared on the Iranian scene in the early 1950s.

3.1.1 The Oil Nationalisation Crisis and Coup of 1953

America first became closely involved in Iran during the Oil Nationalisation Crisis of the early 50s. The Anglo Iranian Oil Company (AIOC), based in Abadan, was Britain's largest overseas concession, bringing in a huge income. However Iran was receiving very little benefit from the AIOC's monopoly in Iran. In 1950 the AIOC earned £200 million from its Iranian assets, only £16 million of which was given to the Iranian government.¹⁰¹ Even more humiliating for Iranian nationalists was the loss of sovereignty that the AIOC represented. To all intents and purposes, Abadan was a British enclave. Resentment grew dramatically towards the British and it was in this environment that the National Front was set up.

The National Front was a coalition of secular liberals led by Muhammad Mosaddeq, bazaar merchants, clergy led by Ayatollah Kashani and socialists. Gradually the National Front increased its influence in parliament and in March 1951 Mosaddeq

¹⁰¹ Bill, J.A., The Eagle and the Lion, (Yale University Press, London, 1988), p. 65

submitted a bill to nationalise the AIOC. It was passed and Mosaddeq soon became Prime Minister. Mosaddeq increasingly played the nationalist card and moved slowly to decrease the powers of the Shah, in favour of the democratically elected parliament.

The British reacted badly to the nationalisation of the AIOC and flatly refused to negotiate. A world-wide ban on Iranian oil was imposed, paratroops were sent to Cyprus and British navy ships arrived in Abadan. The British also began covert action designed to overthrow Mosaddeq. At first the Americans did not support the British and asked them to negotiate. When Mosaddeq came to New York to discuss the situation with the UN, he travelled to Washington where he “was received warmly by President Truman and other US officials.”¹⁰²

The situation changed when Eisenhower was elected President. Anti-Communist fervour was at its height and US officials became increasingly concerned about the influence of Iran’s communist party, Tudeh. The British persuaded the United States that Mosaddeq was a communist and the Americans became set on ousting him. In August 1953, the Americans took advantage of divisions within the National Front and launched a coup. Using covert forces and bribery, the United States successfully removed Mosaddeq from power and reinstated the Shah’s authority. In doing so, they made Mosaddeq a martyr to the nationalist cause and began the notion that the Shah’s power was dependent on American involvement. The coup represents a major Iranian grievance towards America and is the origin of the Iranian belief that America is imperialist.

3.1.2 The American-Iranian alliance: US support for the Shah

After the 1953 coup, the US remained closely involved in Iran. The relationship between America and Iran was cultivated by both sides. The Shah needed America’s support to follow his policy of rapid modernisation and to fulfil his desire for Iran to be the main economic and military power in the region. America needed a way of guaranteeing the security of its interests in the Gulf, namely oil transport and also needed Iran as a strategic ally to counter the Soviet Union. As the pressures of the Cold

¹⁰² Gasiorowski, M.G., ‘The 1953 Coup D’Etat in Iran’, International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies, vol. 19 (1987), p. 268

War increased, it became more and more crucial to America that Iran did not become socialist. For this reason, the US provided Iran with considerable economic and military aid after the coup. For example, “the Eisenhower Administration extended over \$600 million in economic aid and another nearly \$4.5 million in military aid.”¹⁰³ Iran, like many other Middle Eastern states became a client state of America and the Shah became the US’s puppet. For Iranian nationalists, both secular and religious, this American domination was difficult to accept.

Conscious of the waning of his own power during the Mosaddeq era, the Shah developed a system of autocracy and personal power. He relied mainly on a policy of ‘carrot and sticks’. The ‘carrot’ was largely a system of patronage where his supporters were given large economic favours and the ‘stick’ was largely the Shah’s personal secret service called SAVAK. The United States helped set up SAVAK in 1957 and continued to provide the Shah with American intelligence. By the 1970s the Shah had almost completely abandoned the ‘carrot’ in favour of the ‘stick’ and a decade of repression set in. “Domestically, SAVAK was viewed as a police-state monster, and as its tactics became more extreme and ruthless, it acquired an unsavoury reputation not only in Iran but throughout the world.”¹⁰⁴ America’s personal support for the Shah, despite his repressive policies, meant that the United States was a clear target for domestic opposition in Iran. Along with economic disparity and recession, the revolution of 1979 was largely a reaction against the Shah’s autocracy and American interference. The resentment against America for removing the one figure (Mosaddeq) that was seen to truly represent the interests of the Iranian people and replacing him with a secular, repressive dictator clearly remain today.

3.1.3 The Iran-Iraq War

Throughout the war, American policy had been to play Iraq and Iran off against one another to prevent either from becoming too powerful in the region. However by 1986, Iran was on the verge of winning the war. Fearing a strong Iran, the US intervened on behalf of the Iraqis, destroying much of the Iranian navy and many oil installations. On 3 July 1988, the US navy accidentally shot down an Iranian airliner killing almost three hundred civilians, further fuelling anti-American resentment.

¹⁰³ Ramazani, R.K., The United States and Iran, (Praeger, New York 1982), p. 55

¹⁰⁴ Bill, The Eagle and the Lion, p. 98

3.1.4 1990s and Beyond

Current perceptions of the US have been heavily influenced by these past events. Suspicions of America's intentions in the region and towards Iran remain strong. Iran is only too aware, to its cost, of the military and economic muscle America is capable of wielding. Events, such as the speaker of Congress, Newt Gingrich allocating \$20 million to the CIA to overthrow the Iranian government in 1995, are seen as proof that the US is determined to destroy the Islamic Republic of Iran and re-impose a puppet ruler. More recently a leaked Pentagon document named Iran as one of seven countries that America considered potential nuclear targets. Events such as these and antagonistic rhetoric from the US has been used as further proof to Iranian revolutionary ideologues that America is the number one enemy of Iran. Although most of the Iranian population draw a distinction between US government policy and the US people, wanting to engage with the latter, many remain wary of direct government to government communication. Under no circumstances is Iran in a position to openly concede anything to the Americans. Independence and national pride remain paramount. Iran is looking to negotiate with the US only on equal terms and will do anything to avoid domination by what they see as an imperialist superpower. The Tehran Times interviewed the director of the Tehran Times Institute who summed up general opinion in Iran as the following:

"In order to have a fruitful dialogue three conditions are necessary. First, both sides should be honest in their negotiations. Secondly, negotiations should be held on an equal footing. And thirdly, no side should use threats during the course of dialogue. At the moment the United States is not a sincere well-wisher and only favours a one-sided dialogue. In this situation, in which the United States has threatened to use nuclear weapons against Iran, any recommendation to start negotiations with the United States is not in line with the national interests of the country."¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ 'Ground Not Ready for Iran-US Negotiations: Esmaeli', *The Tehran Times*, (19 March 2002), [www.tehrantimes.com/Description.asp?Da=3/19/02&Cat=13&Num=014]

3.2 The US View

As the previous section shows, the roots of the hegemonic contest clearly precede the 1979 Revolution. Iran over time constructed strong feelings of paranoia, suspicion and resentment of the US and thus emerged challenging and opposing the American system. The 1979 Revolution was America's first taste of this independent and hostile Iran and shocked and horrified. The consequent events only confirmed and solidified the idea of a hegemonic contest in the minds of both Americans and Iranians. The behaviour and policies of Iran during the first decade of the Revolution established and reinforced the belief that an Islamic Iran would be an opponent of America's world hegemonic order. As Baylis and Smith point out, "the Iranian Revolution continued to haunt the Western imagination, even though the Islamic Republic gradually ceased to be the Revolutionary force that it once was."¹⁰⁶ Iran came to be viewed, not only as an outsider to America's world order, but also as an incomprehensible menace, determined to undermine its very essence.

The prevalence of Orientalist and neo-Orientalist ideas further contributed to the perception of an Islamic Iran being inherently unable to join America's hegemony. Widely accepted typecasts of Islam and Islamic societies, born out of the Orientalist tradition in the West, portray Muslims as the Other, unable to accept ideas of liberal democracy, capitalism and modernisation. There is little acceptance of the idea that Islamic societies have the potential to take on the ethos of democratic and western thought, merely adjusting it to fit particular environments and circumstances. Most would not go as far as Huntington in suggesting that a clash of Islamic and Christian civilisations is inevitable, because there are many examples of countries in the Middle East working within the world order and incorporating western ideas such as secularisation into their societies. Turkey and Egypt being notable examples. Iran however poses an altogether different question. Can a government based so heavily on Islam ever operate within and accept the dominant world order or will it inherently contradict and oppose it?

¹⁰⁶ Baylis, J. & Smith, S., The Globalization of World Politics: an Introduction to International Relations, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1998), p.388

3.2.1 The 'Islamic' Revolution

Despite the Shah's contentious domestic policies, especially in the 1970s, the Carter Administration was desperate to maintain the special relationship. Iran now accounted for half of America's arms sales, was the second largest oil producer in the world and remained crucial to the US in maintaining stability and US influence in the Gulf. To Carter and his Administration, the Revolution came as a shock and was a massive foreign policy disaster. Overnight the Islamic Revolution of 1979 transformed Iran from America's number one ally in the Persian Gulf to its number one enemy.

Whilst it is true that the Revolution in Iran represented an enormous strategic blow to the US, this is not enough to explain the level of antagonism that emerged between the two countries over the coming decades. The Americans lost a close ally in the Shah, and with him their means to control the Persian Gulf region, however this was not an insurmountable problem. The US military were in a position to and did take over the Shah's role as the regional policeman. Other revolutions and coups have overthrown friends of America but never has this led to the strength of animosity felt towards Iran. The Revolution was clearly more than just a practical, strategic blow for the Americans; it represented the start of a long lasting complex ideological conflict, which has proved extremely difficult to unravel.

There are four main reasons why the Revolution was viewed and continues to be viewed so negatively and threateningly in the US, thereby sowing the seeds of long lasting ideological antagonism. Firstly, strong anti-American feeling was a large feature of Iran's revolutionary ideology. Secondly, due to a lack of communication and reliable information, the American Administration misunderstood various elements of the Revolution and therefore reacted very negatively. Thirdly, prolific negative stereotyping of Islam and the increasing concern in the US over the general threat posed by political Islam meant that the Islamic element of the Revolution was greeted with the utmost suspicion and horror. Finally, a revolutionary ideology with hegemonic aspirations dominated Iranian politics in the first decade of the Islamic Republic. This ideology was openly anti the world system and especially against the power of its leaders, the US and the USSR. Worryingly for the US, the Revolution had the potential

to appeal to all the third world, as Iran attempted to take on the position of leader of the 'oppressed' against the 'oppressors.'¹⁰⁷

3.2.2 Anti-Americanism

From the very beginning, Anti-Americanism played a major role in forming revolutionary ideology. It was a significant ideological element that unified all the initial opposition forces: the nationalists, the communists and the Islamists. Opposition towards America was therefore emphasised and played on. United States' interests were direct targets of the revolutionaries. Attacks included many of the three hundred American companies based in Iran and culminated in the taking over of the US embassy in November 1979. Following Carter's admission of the Shah to the US for medical treatment, huge anti-American demonstrations occurred in Tehran. 'Death to America' was shouted as feelings continued to run high. On 4th November 1979 five hundred extremist students stormed the embassy and took sixty-one Americans hostage. In April 1980 a US rescue attempt failed and the crisis lasted a further year.

Prior to the hostage crisis there had been some debate in the US over policy options towards Iran. The hostage crisis however confirmed to hardliners and persuaded conciliators that the Iranian Revolution was a significant threat to the US and consequently must be condemned and controlled. The extensive coverage of the hostage crisis by the American media meant that the whole nation watched the unfolding events, experiencing first hand the total humiliation and complete horror at what was happening. Dr Gary Sick, an American academic and former Carter official (NSC staff member for Iran and assistant to Brzezinski during the crisis), said in an interview:

"The overall perception of Iran is shaped by the Iranian Revolution and the hostage crisis. Those were the determining events as far as US policy towards Iran. That was true twenty years ago and it is true today ... It has a huge impact. ... That created the image of a ruthless, lawless state that was out of control and was absolutely committed

¹⁰⁷ Khomeini often referred to this Marxist idea, putting it in a Shi'ite context. He seemed to be referring to all oppressed peoples, not just Muslims and saw the oppressors as the two superpowers. See Rajaei,

to an anti-American position and was also prepared to humiliate the United States. And that has never ... really changed.”¹⁰⁸

Not only have the American public never forgotten the images on their television screens, but more damagingly, individuals in the Carter Administration have harboured these negative experiences, carrying them with them throughout their political careers. Warren Christopher, Secretary of State from 1993 to 1997, for example, was involved in the lengthy negotiations for the release of the hostages and never forgave revolutionary Iran for the damage they did to the Carter Presidency and the prestige of the US. His views on Iran, according to some verged on obsessive. According to Gerges, “foreign diplomats reported that when discussing Iran, Christopher’s subtle and judicious manner vanished and his eyes flashed. Some European diplomats accused him of being motivated in part by vengeance.”¹⁰⁹

The taking of western hostages by Lebanese Hizbollah, an Iranian prodigy, during the 1980s and the consequent debacle of the Iran Contra Affair were also highly publicised in the American media. America was once again publicly humiliated by Revolutionary Iran. Coupled with memories of the Embassy take-over, these events only reinforced the image of Iran as a dangerous, unreliable, enemy of America in the minds of politicians and the public. Iran was the first nation, previously ideologically allied to the US to turn against the US’s hegemony so openly and defiantly.

3.2.3 Misinformation, misunderstandings ...

The Americans for their part were surprised by the dramatic changes in Iran and therefore reacted unconstructively. The closeness of the US government to the Shah of Iran meant that the US were shielded from the worsening domestic situation in Iran during the 1970s. They were unaware of the extent of the Shah’s increasing need for repression of his opposition and thus unprepared for the magnitude of the oncoming uprising by the Iranian people. Carter is quoted as saying a month before the Shah was finally overthrown, “I fully expect the Shah to maintain power in Iran and for the

F., Islamic Values and World View: Khomeyni on Man, the State, and International Politics, (New York, 1983), p.79

¹⁰⁸ Interview with Gary Sick, Columbia University, (New York, 11 March 2002); see also interview with Bill Royce, Voice of America Persian Service, (Washington DC, 7 March 2002)

¹⁰⁹ Gerges, F., America and Political Islam: Clash of Cultures or Clash of Interests, p.125

present problems to be resolved.”¹¹⁰ American officials both in Iran and the US were ill informed and the Shah himself did nothing to portray the true picture to the US. James Bill suggests that “powerful Pahlavi supporters in the United States sought to discredit the revolution by portraying the revolutionaries as uncivilised, barbaric, and fanatical and the revolution itself as a fleeting aberration that lacked the support of the Iranian people.”¹¹¹ Even after the Revolution, the Carter Administration refused to acknowledge the genuine popularity of the Islamic elements in the revolution, especially Khomeini. They chose to deal solely with the more moderate interim government of Barzagan, writing off the Islamists as “irrational” and “crazy”.¹¹² The US’s refusal to construct relations with Khomeini meant misperceptions and misunderstandings continued to be rife.

R.K. Ramazani describes the period leading up to the revolution as “the twin revolution of rising alienation,”¹¹³ referring to total disenchantment with the Shah because of his alliance with the US, economic disparity and worsening repression. However, to the US, the revolution was not seen as a nationalist movement against foreign imperialism. Nor was it seen in the context of a history of popular uprisings against unjust and autocratic rulers. The latter was a notion that originated in the days of the Persian Empire, but took on modern democratic elements in the Constitutional Revolution of 1906 and again in the Mosaddeq era. These historical experiences prove the existence in Iran of a strong civil society that is not easily repressed and controlled by an unpopular autocracy. The early days of the ‘Islamic’ Revolution of 1979 were not solely Islamic, more a popular, nationalist revolution, incorporating many disaffected Iranians from secular, religious and left wing camps. Salim Mansur describes it as “one of the greatest populist explosions in human history.”¹¹⁴ To the US though, the Revolution came to be seen as orchestrated and propagated by a religious elite, who were set on resisting modernisation and westernisation and returning Iran to its backward Islamic past. Mansur refutes this, arguing that: “the militancy of the Islamic revolution unfolding in the last quarter of the twentieth century did not represent a

¹¹⁰ Bill, J.A., The Eagle and the Lion, (Yale University Press, London, 1988), p.259

¹¹¹ Gerges, F., America and Political Islam: Clash of Cultures or Clash of Interests, p.62

¹¹² Khomeini was described by Carter as irrational in his memoirs and Hamilton Jordan, Carter’s Chief of Staff wrote “we are dealing with crazy people in Iran.” References in Gerges, F., America and Political Islam: Clash of Cultures or Clash of Interests, p.63

¹¹³ Ramazani, R.K., ‘Iran’a Foreign Policy: Contending Orientations’, Middle East Journal, vol. 43, no. 2, (1989), p.203

¹¹⁴ Mansur, S., ‘The Political Significance for Muslims of the Islamic Revolution in Iran’, Iranian Journal of International Affairs, vol. 5 no. 2 (1993), p.410

nostalgic reversion to the past, but a rejoining of history disconnected by the colonial interlude.”¹¹⁵

The ensuing ruthless power struggle between the revolutionary factions, won by Khomeini and his allies, only proved to the Americans that the revolution was not a general nationalist movement but elite based. William O. Beeman states one of the US's five main foreign policy beliefs as “Nations are ruled by a small group of elite individuals.” He goes on to say: “It is difficult to understand why the United States, with its strong internal ethic supporting democracy and broad-based grass-roots participation in public affairs, finds it so difficult to take these same broad-based processes seriously in other nations.”¹¹⁶ For US analysts therefore, the revolution had no democratic legitimacy and as such was viewed as a negative event, which should be strongly resisted. President Khatami of Iran has since attempted to change this view. He has drawn analogies between Iran's revolutionary project and America's own democratic development.¹¹⁷ As yet he has had little success. The perception of the revolution as a religious, fanatical minority versus a respectable, pro western leader remains.

3.2.4 Perceptions of Islam

Whether the revolution was largely Islamic or nationalist and populist, the US perception of it as predominantly Islamic has significantly influenced the US reaction. Islam is often viewed as inherently opposed to western ideologies and as such is a direct challenge to the US hegemonic attempt. Negative stereotypes of Islamic societies in the west, particularly America, are rife. William Quant claims: “for most Americans, it seems, Islam is a poorly understood religion with disparate menacing images.”¹¹⁸ A poll of Americans done in 1981 found that a large percentage described Arabs as “barbaric and cruel”, “treacherous and cunning” and “warlike and bloodthirsty”.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*, p.410

¹¹⁶ Beeman, W.O., ‘Double Demons: Cultural Impedance in US-Iranian Understanding’, in Rezun, M. (ed), Iran at the Crossroads: Global Relations in a Turbulent Decade, (Westview Press, Oxford, 1990), p.167

¹¹⁷ Khatami, ‘Interview with CNN’, BBC Summary of World Broadcasts ME/3120 MED/1, (9 January 1998)

¹¹⁸ Quant, W.B., ‘Forward: How Should Policymakers Respond to the Challenge of Islamic Activism’ in Hibbard, S.W. & Little, D., Islamic Activism and US Foreign Policy, (US Institute of Peace Press, Washington, 1997), p.xii

¹¹⁹ Slade, S., ‘The Image of the Arab in America: Analysis of a Poll on American Attitudes’, Middle East Journal, vol. 35, no. 2, (1981), pp.144-145, 147, 157

These stereotypes are fuelled by three main popular misconceptions. Firstly that Islam contradicts democracy and liberal ideals because of its autocratic and patriarchal ethos. Secondly that the region's tribal heritage encourages patriarchal and authoritarian government and society. Consequently western liberal thinking such as universal rights and emancipation of women will never exist in Islamic or Middle Eastern societies. Thirdly, ancient historical conflicts between Islam and Christianity have sown the seeds of the belief that the two civilisations are opposed, incompatible, and more dangerously, that Islam is an aggressive religion that encourages violent expansion. The conflict in the Middle East between the Arabs and the Israelis, which has been portrayed in the US as a contest between aggressive, fanatical Islamists and western orientated democrats from the Judo-Christian tradition, has only confirmed this belief.

The very foundation of the United States is based on notions such as the rights of man, including liberty and justice. The Declaration of Independence made to Congress on 4th July 1776 states:

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just Powers from the consent of the governed.”¹²⁰

Equal and individual rights, such as the right to vote and freedom of expression, form the very essence of politics and culture in the US. The dominant view in the US, often described as neo-Orientalism, is that Islam and Islamic societies are the very antithesis of these ideals.¹²¹ The academic, Daniel Pipes sums up the neo-Orientalist view by claiming that not only do “Muslim countries have the most terrorists and the fewest democracies in the world” but that they always will.¹²² Neo-Orientalists claim that the subservient nature of the religion, both in a Muslim's total submission to god and in their women's total submission to their men-folk, go against all notions of free will and freedom of expression. Furthermore, Islam was conceived as a complete way of life, with laws governing every aspect of daily living. This does not sit well with western

¹²⁰ The Declaration of Independence, (4 July 1776), [www.usconstitution.net/declar]

¹²¹ See five polls done in US between 1993 and 1995, quoted in Gerges, F.A., America and Political Islam: Clash of Cultures or Clash of Interests, p.8 which showed that “Islam is basically an anti-democratic religion”

ideas on secularisation. As Ayubi says, "This fusion of matters of belief with matters of conduct in Islam makes it difficult to separate religion from politics."¹²³ A state based on Islam, such as Iran, therefore is a clear representation of the Other; a state that is undemocratic, patriarchal and disregards the universality of human rights. The views of two American academics, Gedmin and Muravchik support this. They claim: "Iran is the font of Islamic fundamentalism, the only still-vibrant ideology challenging the Western-born philosophy of democracy and the rights of man."¹²⁴

Huntington's "the Clash of Civilisations" is another product of prevalent neo-Orientalist trends in America.¹²⁵ Although in the past the article has been heavily criticised, the recent events of September 11th 2001, have given it new life and credibility, especially in America. The premise of his theory is that conflicts between civilisations will replace the economic and ideological conflict of the Cold War. He argued that the identities of different civilisations are so different and opposing that conflict is inevitable. According to Huntington, universal notions of liberalism and human rights have only taken root in the western world and are rejected as neo-imperialism by the rest of the world. Huntington deals specifically with the Islamic world, using the recent emergence of vehement anti-west feeling as evidence of the start of a clash of civilisations. Huntington implies that the world is made up of competing Others, but particularly the dominant West is pitted against 'the Rest'.¹²⁶ The Otherness of civilisations like Islam make conflict inevitable and common understanding and friendship impossible. Huntington would conclude therefore that it is impossible for a country like Iran to ever be a true friend to the US. Iran will be inherently opposed to the US and its culture.

The image of Iran is in the main not extracted from the image of the Islamic world in general. Iranians are therefore incorporated into Orientalist perceptions of the Middle East and the Arabs. These Orientalist perceptions emphasise an historic tribal culture, portraying it as a backward, authoritarian and inferior. Ali Zai'ur maintains that Arabs cannot never fit into the modern state system, arguing that Arabs are "always seeking

¹²² Sadowski, Y., 'The New Orientalism and the Democracy Debate', *Political Islam*, Beinin, J. & Stork, J. (eds), (IB Tauris, London, 1997), pp.33-51

¹²³ Ayubi, N., *Political Islam*, (Routledge, London, 1991), p.50

¹²⁴ Muravchik, J. & Gedmin, J., 'Why Iran is Still a Menace', *Commentary*, (July 1997), p.40

¹²⁵ Huntington, S.P., 'The Clash of Civilisations?', *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 72, no. 3, (1993), pp.22-49

¹²⁶ Baylis, J. & Smith, S. (eds), *The Globalization of World Politics*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1998), p.379

security in solidarity-type relationships rather than in rational-type organisations. Lacking in self-esteem, the Arab is on a continuous quest for a hero or a 'charismatic leader' to deliver him and rectify all wrongs."¹²⁷ Baylis and Smith say: "the belief had been shaped in the West that Oriental peoples were culturally, historically and socially alien. The Orient became associated with references to cruelty, despotism, dishonesty and exotic sexual practise." Although Said's study focuses on the time of European colonialism, many of the negative stereotypes have remained and continue to be reinforced and perpetuated by the western media.¹²⁸ The popular film 'Lawrence of Arabia' and the Disney production of 'Aladdin' are typical examples. This again emphasises the Otherness of people in the Middle East and perpetuates the myth that they can never be incorporated into the US' world order.

The notion that Muslims in the Middle East are aggressively anti the West is the most damaging perception of the region. Particularly since the end of the Cold War and the decline of Communism, political Islam has increasingly been deemed a major threat to the western world. Terrorist activities throughout the Middle East, aimed at the US and Israel and more recently the attacks in New York and Washington have significantly increased this belief. These attacks and terrorist groups are considered irrational, religious fanatics and tend in western eyes to be considered as one and the same problem; the rise of political Islam. The fact that many are fighting for diverse and different causes, such as the liberation of Palestine, the end of the US military presence in Saudi Arabia, the downfall of secular, corrupt government etc... is largely disregarded in favour of the idea that they are all fighting for Islam and against the Christian West. Proponents of this view draw on the history of conflict between Islam and Christianity, East and West, to prove that Muslims have always and always will be anti the West and expansionist. This idea has sullied the name of political Islam detrimentally and with it the image of Iran has suffered.

After the 1979 Revolution, Iran became inextricably associated with political Islam and consequently with all further actions taken under the Islamic banner. Iran's prolific sponsorship of various groups and determination to export the revolution throughout the 1980s supported this assessment. The impact of the Revolution on the American psyche is such that all facets of political Islam are deemed Iranian in nature. Despite the

¹²⁷ Ayubi, N., *Over-stating the Arab State*, (I B Tauris, London, 1995), p.397

¹²⁸ Said, E., *Orientalism*, (Penguin, London, 1995)

fact that many Islamic movements have different religious and nationalist orientations or have little connection with Tehran, in the eyes of many Americans the problem is an Iranian phenomenon. Gedmin and Muravchik suggest this when they say: "Whether or not they share Teheran's Shi'ite orientation, the various Islamist movements take inspiration (and in many cases material assistance) from the Islamic Republic of Iran. Common to them is an explicitly anti-Western outlook, nourished by the conviction that the relative weakness and backwardness of the Islamic world are the results of a conspiracy which has Zionists or Jews at its controls and America – the 'great Satan' – at its center."¹²⁹ It is true that the Iranian Revolution was the world's first significant taste of this anti-American, Islamic ideology and it is also the case that it has flourished since. However it is not clear that establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran was a direct cause of this phenomenon. It is more probable that an Islamic Iran was, rather than a cause, a symptom of an already existing phenomenon. The Iranian Revolution was a catalyst for other Islamic movements but not the root of the problem.

The negative stereotyping of Islam provides a specific problem for the US in that it has many close allies in the region whose rulers and people are Muslims. A distinction has therefore been made between 'good Muslims' and 'bad Muslims.' The former being those Muslims and Islamic countries willing to co-operate and participate in the world order and the latter being those opposed to America's hegemony. For example during the Persian Gulf War of the early 90s, the Kuwaiti were viewed as 'good Muslims' who needed rescuing from the 'bad Muslim', Saddam Hussein. The Palestinians and countries such as Iraq, Syria and the Sudan who counter American interests in the region are seen very differently to those Islamic states such as Saudi Arabia who aid them. Likewise groups who oppose Middle Eastern governments allied to the US, such as Al-Qaeda and Hizbollah are 'bad Muslims' who must be contained. Iran, in the eyes of the US is the very archetype of a 'bad' Muslim state.

3.2.5 Iran's Revolutionary Ideology

Following the initial populist uprising, the US became increasingly concerned with developments in Iran. Two groups emerged, described here as revolutionary ideologues

¹²⁹ Muravchik, J. & Gedmin, J., 'Why Iran is Still a Menace', *Commentary*, (July 1997), p.40

and revolutionary pragmatists. As the former became more and more influential, negative perceptions of the Iranian Revolution as confrontational increased. Significantly for current views on Iran it is these latter perceptions that are emphasised and remembered.

Divisions within the Islamic Republic of Iran over policy, particularly foreign policy, were apparent from the start. One faction, initially led by the provisional Prime Minister, Mehdi Bazargan believed in the pursuit of 'equilibrium' through a policy of non-alignment. By refusing to support both America and the Soviet Union, Iran could aim to develop a relationship based on independence and equality, not dominance and imperialism. Towards America and the USSR, Iran would be non-hostile and neutral. Bazargan followed policies such as cancelling the Iranian-US defence agreement of 1959 and disbanding two secret US listening posts on the Soviet border.¹³⁰ This pragmatic faction countenanced working within the international system, continuing relations, whilst at all times maintaining the independence of Iran. The primary concern was Iran's national interests, with Islamic ideology coming second.

This approach to foreign policy did not constitute a hegemonic challenge to the US or the Soviet Union, but the pragmatist's influence waned with the onset of the US hostage crisis in November 1979. Revolutionary ideologues or idealists saw the policy of neutral equilibrium as pro-America and therefore, partially incited by a meeting between Bazargan and the US National Security Advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski, seized the US embassy and an era of confrontational foreign policy ensued. This event showed Khomeini and much of the Iranian leadership that public support for antagonistic foreign policies was considerable and therefore the seizure of the embassy must be supported no matter what harm was done to external relations. Khomeini's primary concern was his own Islamic and anti-imperialist legitimacy, which was gained from his adherence to the ideology of the revolution, not Iran's relationship with the outside world.

Khomeini himself had an element of both factions in his policy; he was often pragmatic. However the ideologues took many of their ideas and justification from Khomeini's ideas of what an Islamic Iran should be and do. Consequently Khomeini's ideas on

¹³⁰ Ramazani, R.K., 'Iran's Foreign Policy: Contending Orientations', p.205

international relations, although heavily contested and ambiguous, are helpful in explaining why America saw Iran as such a hegemonic threat.

Khomeini saw the Cold War international system as comprising of two opposing suzerain-state systems, the US and the USSR. A suzerain-state system is “a system in which one state asserts and maintains domination and supremacy over the rest. It is not imperial because the member states have a certain independence, nor is it a hegemonial relation because the preponderant state has more than power over the suzerain-states; it exercises authority as well.”¹³¹ Khomeini argued that the two super-powers controlled the world through force and domination in the pursuit of their own interests:

“The threat to the world today stems from the two superpowers. They have manipulated the whole world under their own control and use it for their own interests ... Reason and experience alike tell us that the governments now existing in the world were established by bayonet-point, by force. None of the monarchies or governments that we see in the world are based on justice or [on] a correct foundation that is acceptable to reason. Their foundations are all rotten, being nothing but coercion and force.”¹³²

Here, Khomeini completely dismisses the ideological premise of the US and Soviet world order, arguing that the only way is the path of Islam:

“There are only three paths: one is the ‘straight path,’ [I:6] the others are the path of the East, ‘those who earn thine anger’ [I:7] and the path of the West, ‘those who go astray’ [I:7] ... the straight path is the path of Islam, which is the true path of humanity; it leads man to perfection, and belongs to God.”¹³³

This is a clear challenge to both the US and Soviet hegemonic attempts. By denying that their systems have any ideological base or consensus, Khomeini undermines their respective hegemonies. He is exposing them as exploiters and manipulators, not as leaders of an ideology that works to the benefit of the universal interest. He claims that Islam is the only true ideology, having been given to man by God. Support for

¹³¹ Rajaei, F., Islamic Values and World View: Khomeini on Man, the State and International Politics, (New York, 1983) p.74

¹³² *Ibid*, pp.75,76

Khomeini's ideas clearly directly threatened American and Soviet supremacy, which was based on ideology as well as economic and military dominance.

The Americans were horrified at the new developments in Iran for a number of reasons. Firstly it was a unique challenge. Other states, such as Yugoslavia, Egypt and India, professed non-alignment but still had some dealings with either side. There was no previous example of total rejection and opposition to the bipolar system. Although in practical terms, Khomeini operated within the international system of nation states, within his ideology, Khomeini rejected the idea of nation states, arguing that they were foreign imposed. "The central aim of the colonialist powers, Khomeini maintains, is to destroy the Qu'ran, Islam and the ulama [because] these are the only obstacles in the way of taking over the resources of the Islamic countries. To that end, the powers partitioned the homeland of Islam into small countries in the aftermath of World War I."¹³⁴ He saw the international system not in terms of nation states but in terms of ideology and therefore argued for Islamic unity. He wanted himself and the Islamic Republic of Iran to lead a unified Islamic 'nation' in the model of the Islamic Republic to serve the interests of Islam.

The second problem for the US was that the very emphasis on ideology was much more difficult to oppose than economic, military or political competition. Khomeini intentionally emphasised the need to propagate the Islamic path by example, not by force, because economically, militarily and politically, Iran was the inferior. Iran could not dominate the world, only persuade others that its ideology was the only way and in the universal interest.

Thirdly, just as the US had failed to truly incorporate Iran into its hegemony before the Revolution, there were other states in the Middle East, where America had co-opted the elite but where American ideology had not superseded Islamic or national loyalties. Only 'passive revolution' had occurred. Therefore there was a considerable base for Iranian revolutionaries to successfully disseminate Khomeini's ideology. Lebanon, Iraq and other Gulf countries were potentially particularly open to Iranian revolutionary ideas because of the existence of considerable Shi'ite minorities, opposition to

¹³³ *Ibid*, p.75

¹³⁴ *Ibid*, p.86

America's support for Israel and the growing rejection of America's military and economic dominance in the region.

Finally Khomeini's statements of intentions and policies implied to the US that Iran was going to make every effort to export its revolutionary ideology to unite Muslims in opposition to superpower dominance.

"We will export our Revolution throughout the world because it is an Islamic revolution. The struggle will continue until the calls 'there is no god but God' and 'Muhammad is the messenger of God' are echoed all over the world. The struggle will continue as long as the oppressors subjugate people in every corner of the world."¹³⁵

There were many examples during the 1980s of practical steps that Iran took to spread the message of the revolution and encourage other Muslims to rise up against oppressive regimes dominated by the superpowers. Khomeini believed that the revolution could be spread by 'awakening nations' through propaganda and preaching. To this end Iran began supporting Lebanese Hizbollah and Islamic Amal fighting the Israeli occupation in South Lebanon, allegedly aided an attempted coup in Bahrain in 1981 and sponsored annual demonstrations during the Hajj in Saudi Arabia.¹³⁶ Despite Khomeini's teachings, many revolutionary ideologues went further, arguing for the export of the revolution "by any means, including the use of force."¹³⁷ Hence Revolutionary Guards were sent to train and fight in Lebanon and Iran was allegedly involved in the bombing of US and French forces in Lebanon in 1983 and the taking of western hostages throughout the 1980s. These events directly challenged US interests and prestige in the region and etched damaging images of Iran deeper onto the American psyche. Two hundred and forty one US marines were killed in the 1983 Beirut bombing and numerous US citizens were amongst those kidnapped in the 80s.

The practical and physical threats backed up the ideological challenge emanating from Iran, gave credence to the American belief that Iran was a considerable threat to its hegemonic attempt, especially in the Islamic world. The total rejection by Iranian ideologues of the international system and its ideologies meant that co-opting Iran by

¹³⁵ *Ibid*, p.82

¹³⁶ Ramazani, R.K., 'Iran's Foreign Policy: Contending Orientations', p.210

¹³⁷ *Ibid*, p.209

economic and political influence was impossible. They seemed intent on creating a rival hegemony based around Khomeini's interpretation of Islam and international politics.

Contact was maintained by America with the pragmatists in Iran's foreign policy, but was often undermined. For example, Rafsanjani attempted to gain essential military supplies from America to fight Iraq by offering to help the Americans get the release of western hostages in Lebanon. This was part of a larger policy by Rafsanjani "to restore Iran's links with the West, links considered crucial for the survival of the Islamic Republic."¹³⁸ In practise Iran did not exert sufficient pressure on Shi'ite militias in Lebanon and only two hostages were released.¹³⁹ Rafsanjani's pragmatic policy failed completely when Iranian ideologues exposed the story, successfully sabotaging negotiations.

When negotiations were publicised, the Administration was acutely embarrassed at the exposure of their hypocrisy and American Gulf allies such as Kuwait and Saudi Arabia were furious. The 'Affair' put an end to secret communications and left America wary of approaching Iran again. The situation proved to the US that Iran was incapable of acting within the realms of realism and was therefore an unreliable and unpredictable negotiating partner. It was clear to the US that whilst ideologues dominated Iran's foreign policy during the 1980s, the ideological challenge to America was considerable.

The Islamic Republic of Iran represented an ideology that not only offered an alternative to the US and Soviet models but provided another universal ideology, with a potentially significant support base that would be in direct competition with previous ideological norms. Here was an alternative, distinctive worldview, another hegemonic attempt. True hegemony is not achievable but each attempt is aiming towards absolute parameters. The ideologies emerging from Iran had the potential to start a new historic bloc, supplanting US domination. America therefore had every reason to have considerable concerns about the ideological challenge from Iran.

¹³⁸ Kurzen, C., 'Soft on Satan: Challenges for Iranian US Relations', Middle East Policy, vol. 6 (1998), p.67

3.3 The Lasting Effect and the US Response

Preconceptions of Islam, the communication breakdown and the openness of Iran's anti-American behaviour sparked an immediate distrust and dislike of the goings on in Iran that pertain today. The revolution was seen in the US as a personal affront on many levels. Firstly their number one ally in the region was ignominiously removed. Secondly the revolutionaries specifically targeted the US's alliance with the Shah as a major cause of Iran's problems. Vehement accusations of American imperialism were made and American interests in Iran were attacked. The lack of understanding of the domestic climate in Iran prior to the revolution meant that the US could not comprehend any rational reasons behind the hostility and merely saw it as irrational and typical of an Islamic movement; in other words, anti the liberal, democratic world order. The Revolution was seen in terms of crazy, irrational mullahs pitted against rational, western style government. Previous stereotypes of Islam and the Islamic movement were reinforced and emphasised.

All of the above – the image of Muslims and Islam, the anti American nature of the revolution and the hostage crisis, the lack of good intelligence and the revolutionary behaviour of Iran in the early years – all contributed to the view that the Islamic Republic of Iran was fundamentally ideologically opposed to the US and always would be. The strength of this belief has coloured and prevented opportunities for the re-establishment of relations. Whatever Iran does and however Iran behaves, these pertaining images mean it will always be viewed as an outsider, as an opponent of America's hegemony. A participant in a US Institute of Peace discussion on Iran is quoted as saying: "US policy as stated seems as if it is fundamentally hostile to Iran – not just the mullahs – and that anything they do will not be enough."¹⁴⁰

To maintain the position that the US hegemony enjoys as a widely accepted norm, any opposing position is consciously and subconsciously dismissed as invalid and illogical. The propagation, throughout the hegemony, of the belief in the irrationality of a state like Iran explains the US policy of isolation and demonisation of Iran. Bowen's article on 'rogue' states says: "there is a tendency to view these regimes as unpredictable,

¹³⁹ Hooglund, E., 'The United States and Iran, 1981-9', in Ehteshami, A. & Varasteh, M. (eds), Iran and the International Community, (Routledge, London, 1991), p. 40

reckless, bellicose, incapable of moderation under most circumstance, out of touch with reality and consequently very difficult to conduct normal relations with.”¹⁴¹ The US isolates Iran, arguing that there is no point negotiating to get changes in WMD, terrorism or Middle East peace process policies because Iran will not behave as a typical player on the international scene. Iran is dismissed as an anomaly that will remain outside the realities of the rational world. The State Department tags of ‘rogue’ or ‘outlaw’ state pertained well into the 1990s. Anthony Lake (National Security Advisor), referring in part to Iran, stated in 1994 that: “[America must] face the reality of recalcitrant and outlaw states that not only chose to remain outside the family but assault its basic values ... [These states] exhibit a chronic inability to engage constructively with the outside world.”¹⁴² The hegemonic contest has prevented the US from allowing Iran to be seen as a rational, typical player in the world of states, capable of operating responsibly within the world system.

The idea within the US of a hegemonic contest has continued despite very real changes in Iran. Following the Iran Iraq War, various factors combined to cause a significant shift in Iran’s foreign policy away from revolutionary ideology and towards pragmatism. Iran therefore ceased to constitute such a significant hegemonic threat and yet, America continued to perceive them as one. American policy did not alter and, if anything, became more hard line. The image of Iran as an ideological antagonist proved impossible to change.

After the Iran-Iraq War, economic and military recovery became essential for the survival of the Islamic Republic. This forced Iran into more acceptable foreign policies so that it could open itself up for trade. To do this they had to operate within the international system and even positively promote relations with former adversaries. Security and stability in the region was seen as paramount to economic prosperity. Therefore regional, as well as international co-operation was promoted. Economic contacts and communications were established with European countries and others such as Japan, South Korea, Brazil, India, Taiwan, Turkey, as well as the GCC states, including Saudi Arabia.¹⁴³ Efforts to export the revolution were drastically curtailed,

¹⁴⁰ Hibbard, S.W. & Little, D., Islamic Activism and US Foreign Policy, (US Institute of Peace Press, Washington, 1997), p.32

¹⁴¹ Bowen, W., ‘Rogues No More’, World Today 2000, Vol. 56 (2000), p.15

¹⁴² Bowen, W., ‘Rogues No More’, World Today 2000, Vol. 56 (2000), p.14

¹⁴³ Ehteshami, A., After Khomeini: The Iranian Second Republic, (London, 1995)

partly because there were adverse affects on Iran's national interests, but also because other Islamic societies were not very receptive to Khomeini's interpretation of Islam and the political system. National loyalties and loyalties to other sects of Islam proved too strong to be broken even by a charismatic leader such as Khomeini. The death of Khomeini further weakened the ideological strength of Iran.

President Rafsanjani, elected in 1989 was the champion of this new pragmatic perspective. It was under him that Iran sought to boost its international standing and acceptance by remaining neutral in the Gulf War of 1990-91. Ideologically Iran was opposed to any interference by outside powers in the region, arguing that "foreigners do not come here for the sake of our people or our interests ... if there are any points of contention among us, we should resolve them ourselves."¹⁴⁴ However, in the case of the Gulf crisis, Iran prioritised the strategic interest of a stable region above ideology. This position went some way to convincing the world that Iran was keen to co-operate within the international system. It did much to improve already improving relations with other Gulf States, thereby improving economic prospects. The isolation of Iraq that followed was also welcomed by Iran. Ehteshami interestingly points out that: "in 1990 ... Iran stood on the side of the west and for Kuwaiti sovereignty and the right of its Emir to rule the sheikdom, when just a few years earlier it had not only tried to secure the demise of the ruling Al-Sabah family through support for Islamic dissident forces in Kuwait, but had played a significant part in escalating regional tensions."¹⁴⁵

Policy in Lebanon, the previous hotbed of Iranian revolutionary ideology also significantly moderated. Rafsanjani personally marginalized the influence of the more extreme clerical factions, most notably the former Iranian Ambassador to Syria, Hoijatoleslam Mohtashemi. He set about forging links with more moderate Shi'ite groups in Lebanon and helped facilitate the return of western hostages.

Given the economic and political benefit a receptive Iran could bring to the region and the world in terms of oil and gas and geographical, demographic and military standing, Iran assumed that foreign policy changes would be the prerequisite to economic and political recognition and inclusion. This was not the case. Misunderstandings,

¹⁴⁴ Rafsanjani, A.A.H. 'Address by Ali Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran', *Middle East Journal*, vol. 44, (1990), p.464-465

¹⁴⁵ Ehteshami, A., *After Khomeini; The Iranian Second Republic*, p.152

accusations and policy sabotage by opponents to Iran's reconciliation continued to undermine Iran's progress. Ansari says: "Investment did not materialise and it was increasingly apparent that the slightest 'misdemeanour' on Iran's part, be it with respect to human rights or through alleged terrorist activities, inevitably and almost automatically led to a diplomatic setback."¹⁴⁶

Iran assumed that the US would follow its professed realist line and respond positively to the changes. Iranian policy makers were genuinely bewildered at the American response who, far from accepting Iran onto the international scene, pursued an increasingly isolationist policy towards Iran during the early 1990s. As the Iran Contra Affair showed, previous US Administrations were not adverse to attempting to deal with Iran on a practical level. Relations between the two states were still fluid. This changed with the first Clinton Administration, which consolidated and solidified the present isolationist, anti Iran position. The American government under Clinton claimed to remain concerned about Iran's regional ambitions. They professed concern about Iran's continued sponsorship of Islamic terrorist groups, alleged development of weapons of mass destruction and disruption of the Arab-Israeli peace process. Consequently, in 1993, the US initiated the policy of dual containment.

The idea of Clinton's dual containmentment was to isolate both Iran and Iraq to keep them weak. This isolation took the form of an arms ban, a ban on dual-use technologies, a total import ban on Iranian products, controls on exports to Iran and a diplomatic stance to block all lending to Iran from international financial institutions. As part of the policy, the U.S. also undertook to pressure and persuade other countries to follow their lead. "Washington will work 'energetically' to persuade other countries not to engage in military transactions or 'normal commercial relations' with Tehran."¹⁴⁷

A review of the policy was carried out in 1995, which concluded that Iran's behaviour had worsened. In a meeting with the Senate, Ellen Laipson, a representative of the national security council reported: "We believe that the rise in terrorism against the Middle East peace process that began in the fall of 1994 has some links to Iran... We also saw continuing and, in some ways, accelerating signs of Iran's efforts to procure

¹⁴⁶ Ansari, A., Iran, Islam and Democracy: The Politics of Managing Change, (RIIA, London, 2000), p.130

¹⁴⁷ Gause, F.G. 'The Illogic of Dual Containmentment', Foreign Affairs, vol.73 (1994), p. 57

the materials and technology needed for a weapons-of-mass-destruction program.”¹⁴⁸ As a consequence of these perceptions, the policy was reinforced. Trade, loans and financial services to Iran were all prohibited. In 1996 the Iran and Libya Sanctions Act was passed. This act threatened to sanction anyone, including foreign companies if they invested more than \$40 million (now lowered to \$20 million) in Iran.

According to Ansari this policy of increasing isolation, “was not in essence a matter of ‘interest’ but a matter of ‘communication’.”¹⁴⁹ America still perceived Iran as a dangerous adversary, both ideologically and strategically. Past animosity meant that the Americans viewed Iran’s reconciliation policies, not positively, but as an attempt to resume its position as a regional power, in direct competition with America. The US was suspicious of Iranian economic and military recovery and feared that Iran would take over America’s role as the regional ‘policeman’, but not, as in the shah’s time, under US control. Rafsanjani strongly denied this accusation:

“Under no circumstances are we prepared to have the clock turned back in the Persian Gulf – and we ourselves will never be willing – even as an independent sovereign state to serve as the guardian of others, since this goes against the very grain and nature of our revolution.”¹⁵⁰

However, from the American perspective, there were very good reasons why an influential Iran would be a threat to its interests in the region. Again the threat was mainly ideological rather than physical. When the Arab-Israeli peace process got off the ground at the Madrid Conference of October 1991, Iran was left increasingly isolated in its position towards Israel. The peace process provided “tangible evidence that the Islamic agenda had little or no relevance to the policies of most Arab states.”¹⁵¹ This left the way open for Iran to monopolise the Islamic and anti-Israel agenda in the Arab world, where previously the fact that Iran was not Arab and Shi’ite had meant Tehran had little influence. Iran was able to unite many disparate groups from all over the Arab world, both secular and Islamic, in an anti-Madrid coalition and thus become the focal point of the pro-Palestinian lobby. This earned them considerable influence.

¹⁴⁸ Laipson, E., ‘Symposium: U.S. policy toward Iran...’, (3rd November 1995), Congressional Record, [wais.access.gpo.gov]

¹⁴⁹ Ansari, A., Iran, Islam and Democracy: The Politics of Managing Change, p.130

¹⁵⁰ Rafsanjani, A.A.H., ‘Address by Ali Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran’, p.463

For example, Iran organised a rival conference to Madrid entitled the International Conference on the Support of the Palestinian Islamic Revolution, which attracted representatives from forty-nine countries.¹⁵² On a practical level, Iran did little but provide some financial backing, but on an ideological level, Iran provided a forum for opponents of the peace process to air anti Israeli and American views.

This leadership of the anti-Israeli agenda directly challenged US interests in the region and provided a substantial reason for the Americans to be suspicious of Iranian intentions. The collapse of the USSR and the emergence of the Central Asian States, with their majority Islamic population was a further source of concern for the US. Iran not only had new economic markets to develop, but also a new audience potentially receptive to the idea of further Islamic states in the Iranian model. In fact economic priorities meant that interfering with states in Central Asia was not high on Iran's agenda. However, Saudi Arabia was pumping money and its own Islamic teachings into the area, which reawakened the long-standing rivalry with Iran for influence.

Although Rafsanjani professed that Iran was not a physical threat to other states in the region, that its interests were to promote stability and co-operation, Iran's stance against America's presence in the Gulf had the potential to totally undermine the US's attempts at supremacy in the region. Despite wanting to reintegrate into the world economic system, Iran was still not willing to join America's world order. Domestic public opinion would have made any significant loss of independence, be it ideological, political or economic, completely unacceptable to Iran. It would have been against the very ethos of the Revolution. Rafsanjani continued to encourage other states in the region to follow Iran's independent stance: "we are opposed to the existing policy which entails seeking protection from foreigners and guaranteeing security through a foreign naval presence ... There is no reason for their presence in the south. It serves no purpose for them to remain. The only reason is to provoke us so we will fight one another. Hence, if there are any points of contention among us, we should resolve them ourselves."¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ Ehteshami, A., *After Khomeini: The Iranian Second Republic*, p.157

¹⁵² *Ibid*, p.157

¹⁵³ Rafsanjani, A.A.H., 'Address by Ali Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran', p.463-465

Despite US concerns and despite the difficulty in proving what Iranian intentions were in pursuing conciliatory policies, it is certainly the case that economic recovery and military reconstruction were the priorities for the Rafsanjani administration. America could have harnessed this desire for integration and encouraged further moderation, including potentially the exploitation of Iranian markets by US companies. However, suspicions based largely on ideological assumptions prevented them from doing this. For Iranian policymakers, as Ansari says: “the realisation that they had lost the initiative during the first decade of the revolution and that the international environment was in effect ideologically reconstructed against them was a bitter pill to swallow.”¹⁵⁴ Iran has come to realise under Khatami that not only are ‘real’ policy changes needed but that US suspicions must be removed to change Iran’s status as a rogue state. Iran needs to persuade America and the world that it is not an ideological challenge to the present world order.

The irony of the American Iranian relationship is that as Iran has further pursued an integrative approach, recognising the limitations of their revolutionary ideology, America has pursued an increasingly severe policy. America continues to perceive Iran as “an independent revisionist actor; a challenger to the prestige hierarchy, a potential economic and military power, a potentially alternative value structure and civilisational order, and an inspiration to those disenchanted with the existing global system.”¹⁵⁵ It may be that America has externalised its own faults. Very heavily based itself on an ideological foundation, America may be assuming that Iran is similarly ideological. Thierry Hentsch in his study of Orientalism believes this to be a common phenomenon in western perceptions of the Muslim world. “He believes that Western images of the Muslim world are projections of Western insecurities about Self onto the Other, and that as long as the other is the mirror for the Self, there will always be conflict.”¹⁵⁶

Whether justified or not, this view of Iran as an opponent of the US system remains widely accepted in America. The US therefore remains wary and largely unwilling to accept and deal with an Islamic Iran. The majority of US policymakers continue to see Iran in absolute terms, refusing to accept the potential validity of any conciliatory

¹⁵⁴ Ansari, A., ‘Iranian Foreign Policy Under Khatami: Reform and Reintegration’, in *Iran and Eurasia*, Ehteshami, A. & Mohammadi, A. (eds), (Ithaca, Reading, 2000)

¹⁵⁵ Sabet, A.G.E., ‘Dual Containment and Beyond: Reflections on American Strategic Thinking’, *Mediterranean Politics*, vol. 4 (1999), p.87

moves by Tehran. No matter how numerous and how significant changes to Iran's foreign policy are, it will only be when these perceptions of Iran are deconstructed from within the US that relations can ever improve.

¹⁵⁶ Progler, J.A., 'The Utility of Islamic Imagery in the West: An American Case Study', (Winter 1997), [www.ireland.iol.ie/~afifi/Articles/image]

CHAPTER 4: THE WASHINGTON POLICY MONOPOLY

4. THE WASHINGTON POLICY MONOPOLY

There have been numerous opportunities for change. The 'realist' justifications for policy have been shown to be exaggerated, based on highly subjective evidence and not universally applied to all states. There remains no significant practical obstruction to America forming some kind of relationship with Iran. In fact, the opposite is true; there are numerous impetuses for both sides to begin dialogue. For example, just as in Afghanistan, a co-operative Iran would be very useful to Washington in the event of any action taken against Iraq. Also, the economic benefits to both countries of lifting trade restrictions and approving a Caspian oil pipeline through Iran are well documented and valid. Despite all of this, the new Bush Administration has not altered policy towards Iran.

Furthermore America remains alone in the world in believing that isolation and blanket condemnation will succeed in bringing about positive changes in Iran's foreign policy. The European Union for one has chosen a path of 'Critical Dialogue', encouraging the positive changes in Iran and using its influence to condemn unacceptable behaviour. The Europeans criticise American policy, arguing that the constant antagonism undermines the reformist movement in Iran and makes it more difficult for politicians like Khatami to advocate the changes demanded by the Americans.¹⁵⁷ Washington continues to provide ammunition for the more ideological elements in Iran who are then able to blame domestic economic and political problems on American hostility. As for nuclear proliferation, which at present America seems to view as the most worrying concern, a strong case can be made that isolation actually provides motivation to pursue the nuclear option. As Fawaz A Gerges says: "Treating Iran as an 'international outlaw' and 'rogue' state will reinforce its ruling elite's collective sense of paranoia. To prevent Iran from going nuclear, Washington should aim to assimilate the Islamic Republic into the international community, rather than treating it as an outcast."¹⁵⁸

Washington's policy does not reflect changes in Iran nor acknowledge these world-wide criticisms because policy making towards Iran is heavily steeped in ideology, rather than practical considerations. The climate is such that a rational and pragmatic analysis

¹⁵⁷ 'Means of Persuasion', *The Economist*, (16th February 2002), p.12

¹⁵⁸ Gerges, A., *America and Political Islam: Clash of Culture or Clash of Interests*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1999), p.138

of the situation by Washington is impossible. As has been discussed, policymaking can never be made in a vacuum, devoid of ideology. Policy makers are all individuals and are therefore subject to ideological influences such as preconceptions, stereotypes and historical experience. The ideological aspect in the relationship with Iran, however, has hijacked policy to an unprecedented and unique extent. Amongst the foreign policy elite and the American public, there is such a strong preoccupation with Iran as a menacing, pariah state that the many contradictory voices in Washington and the world go completely unheard.

This uniformity in policy can be explained by applying Gramsci's ideas on hegemony in a second context; with respect to the American policy making process towards Iran. The US foreign policy making process is a complex system of competing groups, interests and ideas. Every group has its own agenda and is vying for supremacy over policy. Again a group has two tools: coercion and consensus. Through the provision of considerable election funds a group can coerce various politicians to vote a certain way. However on its own, this is a very crude method and open to public and media criticism. Particularly within a democratic society, the use of ideas and persuasion to create a consensus is a much more effective tool. The more successful a group is at disseminating its own ideas within the system, the more policy reflects their own agenda.

In the case of Iran, whilst there are minor differences in approach between the State Department and the Administration and the Congress and the Defence Department (the latter two pushing for a tougher line on Iran), the policy consensus remains isolation, condemnation and economic punishment. It is predominantly the Israeli Lobby and to a lesser extent the Defence Department in the US that has sought and largely succeeded in portraying their own agenda. In a Gramscian 'war of position' the Israeli Lobby has helped form and maintained an hegemony over US policy towards Iran by the disseminating their ideas in the media, intelligence networks, and the Congressional system. They have drawn on and manipulated preconceptions of Iran leading to a disproportionate level of influence on policy. The success of the Israeli Lobby is largely down to its ideological and organisational strength in America but also opposition to its ideas on Iran is insubstantial and constantly undermined. The following is an in depth analysis of the America's foreign policy making system, examining how and why the policy monopoly has been achieved and maintained.

4.1 The Mechanics of the American Foreign Policy Making System

The foreign policy making process in the United States, like all facets of American government, is a system of competing factions with conflicting interests and priorities. This system was laid out in the constitution and based firmly on the checks and balances idea. The sharing of foreign policy powers between Congress and the Administration meant each were accountable to the other. Numerous access points to the system were designed to allow a variety of differing groups to influence policy, intended to create a broad representation of society's views. This was the ideal of the constitution but in practise the situation has been very different. Opinions on the realities of foreign policymaking and policymaking in general are contentious and have changed over time. For example many describe presidential power versus Congressional power as such: "the president proposes, Congress disposes."¹⁵⁹ In other words the president proposes policy and Congress will criticise it and amend it where necessary. However over time Congress has become more proactive. After the debacle of the Vietnam War for example, Congress became more assertive, heavily curtailing the president's powers and demanding more information and say in projected operations abroad. In the case of Iran, the ILSA and the extension of ILSA originated in Congress and was pushed through despite reservations from both the Clinton and Bush administrations.

Broadly speaking the foreign policymaking process consists of the following institutions: the president and his advisors (especially the National Security Council), the State Department, the Defence Department, and Congress (particularly the House and Senate foreign affairs committees). These are influenced to varying degrees by the following: the views and lobbying abilities of official interest groups, public opinion, the media and the stances of foreign governments and international institutions. Traditionally all the above institutions have different characteristics, attitudes and therefore differing perspectives on policy choices. For example the Defence Department's priority is to protect its extensive budget in order to maintain weapons programmes and prevent job cutbacks. They are therefore likely to take a more antagonistic approach to potential threats, exaggerating them to justify enormous defence spending. The State Department in contrast, traditionally takes a more accommodating approach to potential problems abroad, often arguing for dialogue and

¹⁵⁹ Kegley, C.W. & Wittkopf, E.R., *American Foreign Policy*, (fifth edition, Palgrave, Basingstoke, 1996), p.421

negotiation over the use of force or sanctions. The State Department has better contacts with foreign governments and consequently is more aware of the affects of American actions on international relationships. The President is more attune to public opinion as expressed in the media, which is ultimately where his legitimacy lies. Congress on the other hand is the bastion of interest groups. Congress' access to public opinion on foreign affairs relies heavily on official interest groups.

The powers of these different institutions and the strength of these influences are not clear cut and often strongly contested. The primary debate on foreign policymaking however focuses on who makes policy and does it reflect the views of the American people. In a liberal democratic system, the ideal must be that public opinion is represented by politicians and then reflected in policy choices. The accusation often levelled at the American foreign policy system is that it is elite led and is not sufficiently accountable to the American public. This accusation is backed up by two factors: firstly that the personnel within the process all come from a similar educational and class background and secondly that the American public are largely uninterested and ill informed about foreign affairs and therefore do not criticise or scrutinise elite decisions. According to Kegley and Wittkopf, "top positions have been filled by people from the upper class who were educated at the nations best schools ...they have generally come from predominantly white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant (WASP) backgrounds; a disproportionate number have been trained in law; and many have had extensive experience in big business."¹⁶⁰ They describe American society as a pyramid with very few at the apex knowledgeable, able and willing to become involved in the process. The tier below are interested in foreign affairs but have no access to government. The majority however, which Kegley and Wittkopf put at about 90%, are in the main indifferent.¹⁶¹ Hague, Harrop and Breslin discuss other studies of democracies that "confirm the ignorance of large sections of the public, especially on foreign policy issues remote from ordinary life."¹⁶² This of course alters when a major crisis occurs, such as the Iranian hostage crisis, the Gulf War of the early 90s or September 11th, all of which captured the public's imagination. The concern in these situations however, is that, because the public are generally ill informed, they will

¹⁶⁰ Kegley, C.W. & Wittkopf, E.R., *American Foreign Policy*, p.267

¹⁶¹ Kegley, C.W. & Wittkopf, E.R., *American Foreign Policy*, p.283

¹⁶² Hague, R., Harrop, M. & Breslin, S., *Comparative Government and Politics*, (fourth edition, MacMillan Press, London, 1998), P.110

merely accept wholeheartedly a government position, supported by media reports and fail to scrutinise policy adequately.

The role of media becomes key here because it is the main source of public information. Any knowledge the general public does accrue on foreign affairs originates largely from the media, especially television. Evidence also suggests that policy makers themselves rely heavily on media information, especially from newspapers such as the New York Times. In a study of one hundred officials in policy positions, quoted in Kegley and Wittkopf, nearly two-thirds stated that the media were generally “their most rapid source of information in crisis situations” and over four-fifths indicated the media were “an important source of policy-relevant information.”¹⁶³ This position as primary disseminator of information on foreign affairs gives the media tremendous influence on what is discussed and how it is discussed. In Iran’s case an interesting example was the coverage of the shooting down of the Iranian airliner by the USS Vincennes. This story was pushed to the back pages by coverage of a slump in Wall Street and consequently many in the American public were not and are still not aware of the enormity and significance of the event on US Iranian relations. The dramatic events of the Iranian hostage crisis on the other hand dominated the media for weeks. Consequently it is the latter, not the former, event that is associated, in the minds of Americans, with Iran. Likewise, within minutes of the Oklahoma City bombing in April 1995, the media was comparing the attack to the World Trade Centre bombing of 1993 and the truck bombings in Lebanon in the 1980s. Slogans such as “terror in the heartland” or “Muslim terrorists wreaking havoc in the land they loathe”¹⁶⁴ appeared. The assumption that this was perpetrated by Islamic militants was instantaneous and immediately taken up by politicians desperate to make political capital on issues such as immigration. When it became clear that the bomber was a home-grown white supremacist, the media reacted as if this was a new and isolated phenomenon and slogans changed from “terror in the heartland” to “tragedy in Oklahoma.”¹⁶⁵ This illuminates just how the media can dictate how an event is reported and shows the effects of their interpretation on a receptive political and public scene.

¹⁶³ Kegley, C.W. & Wittkopf, E.R., *American Foreign Policy*, p.325

¹⁶⁴ Proglor, J.A., ‘The Utility of Islamic Imagery in the West: An American Case Study’, (Winter 1997), [www.ireland.iol.ie/~afifi/Articles/image]

Concerns are also often raised about the power of special interest groups within the realms of foreign policy. Some argue that the lack of public interest and knowledge on foreign affairs allows interest groups, particularly single-issue interest groups, to dominate policy. Organised, focused groups become the primary and sometimes sole main influence on policymakers, unchallenged by society in the main. This leaves the process open to manipulation by powerful groups such as the military-industrial complex, big business and ethnic groups. Others argue, however that interest groups are a positive feature of American politics, helping the public to get involved in policy making and providing access to top officials and politicians. This pluralist model however is limited in the foreign policy context because of the even lower level of public interest and participation; it is undoubtedly comparatively easy for specific interest groups to monopolise the policy agenda.

The above describes very briefly the kinds of factors and influences involved in the foreign policy making system. In the case of Iran, it is uniquely unnecessary to investigate meticulously the extent to which these factors and institutions have a say in policy because largely there is a policy consensus. Views on Iran – its image, behaviour and intentions – vary little within Washington, the media and amongst the wider public. Even across party lines, there is broad bipartisan support for a tough policy on Iran. This lack of debate, despite real and recognised changes in Iran's behaviour over time, is curious and deserves close attention.

The two government departments closely involved in policy making towards Iran are the State Department and the Defence Department. The former is primarily concerned with terrorism, assessing and encouraging Iran's internal reform and managing Iran's regional ambitions and new alliances. The latter is principally concerned with Iran's weapons proliferation, particularly nuclear, and also regional stability. Although during the Clinton Administration there was much input from the President on Iranian policy, the Bush Administration has taken little initiative, leaving Iranian policy for the time being subject to review.

This leaves Congress as the other main actor in the system. This is where most of the open discussion on Iran takes place. Whilst the current president has remained

¹⁶⁵ Progler, J.A., 'The Utility of Islamic Imagery in the West: An American Case Study', (Winter 1997), [www.ireland.iol.ie/~affi/Articles/image]

relatively inactive on a practical level on the Iranian question, initiatives from Congress, such as the renewal of ILSA and money for CIA operations to overthrow the Iranian regime, have continued.¹⁶⁶ It is also where opinion on Iran is most emotive and hard line. The following are statements from a number of members of Congress, designed to represent the strength of feeling and views of the majority:

“Both factions in Iran are absolutely united in their support for terrorism, in their total opposition to the peace process and in their belief that Iran should go full speed ahead in developing nuclear weapons and developing the infrastructure to deliver those weapons.”¹⁶⁷

(Congressman Brad Sherman, 26 July 2001)

“Iran has done absolutely nothing to merit the lifting of sanctions and in some key ways, its international behaviour has gotten worse ... Appeasement won't change that.”¹⁶⁸

(Congressman Gary Ackerman, 23 May 2001)

“Iran continues to support Hezbollah, Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and other radical groups dedicated to the destruction of Israel ... And the Iranian regime has accelerated its aggressive pursuit of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and ballistic missiles.”¹⁶⁹

(Congressman Howard L. Berman, 23 May 2001)

“The United States must stand up and speak out for our democratic and Jefferson values and the dignity of all human beings. We must send Iran and Libya a strong message that such behaviour will not be tolerated.”¹⁷⁰

(Congressman Eric Cantor, 21 June 2001)

¹⁶⁶ Congressional Speaker, Newt Gingrich pushed for \$20 million for CIA operations against the Iranian regime, despite the fact that the CIA said operations were likely to fail, it was against the Algier Accord and there were major reservations about the possible repercussions amongst the Clinton Administration. See Razi, G.H., ‘The Nature and Sources of US Opposition to Iran: A Framework for Foreign Policy Analysis’, *The Iranian Journal for International Affairs*, vol. 10, no. 3, (1998), p.246-247

¹⁶⁷ Sherman, B., Press Release: Sherman Welcomes Renewal of Iran and Libya Sanctions Act, (26 July 2001), [www.house.gov/Sherman/press/pr_010726_sanctionsact]

¹⁶⁸ Ackerman, G., Ackerman Demands Iran/Libya Sanctions Remain in Place, (23 May 2001), [www.house.gov/Ackerman/press/ilsa]

¹⁶⁹ Berman, H.L., Reps. Berman, Gilman introduce legislation to extend Iran-Libya Sanctions Act, (23 May 2001), [www.house.gov/berman/pr052301]

Congress is also the focus of limited positive approaches. Within the Track 2 process, a likely precursor to formal relations between the two is informal meetings between US and Iranian parliamentarians. Communication between members of Congress and members of the Iranian Majlis have been proposed but failed on a number of occasions. There are a few in Congress, albeit in the minority that believe dialogue with Iran is the best policy option. Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney is one of those: "While Iranians have voted overwhelmingly in favor of reform and democratisation in three consecutive elections ... our policy has not matched these dramatic changes ... many of our interests would be better served through dialogue with Iran."¹⁷¹

Congress is a key player in Iranian policy mainly because of its connection with interest groups. The main influence on policy making towards Iran is the Israeli Lobby, whose primary constituency is Congress. The other interest group involved in the process is the Energy Lobby. Big business, especially American oil and gas companies, are keen to be allowed back into Iran. Dual containment has meant they have been consistently losing out to European and Asian rivals, who are signing more and more deals in Iran, despite the ILSA.

4.1.2 The Defence Department

The Defence Department and Congress are the two main government institutions that are maintaining and pushing for a tough policy on Iran. To justify their positions they continue to perpetuate the negative image of Iran and reinforce to the President, public and media the real dangers of Iran's sponsorship of terrorism, nuclear weapons proliferation and the disruption of the Middle East peace process. Secretary of Defence, Donald Rumsfeld summed up the Defence Department's view of Iran in a press briefing made on 1 April 2002:

¹⁷⁰ Cantor, E., News Room: House International Relations Committee Approves Five-Year Extension of Iran-Libya Sanctions Act, (21 June 2001), [cantor.house.gov/newsroom/2001/20010621ilsa]

¹⁷¹ McKinney, C., News Brief: Iran-Libya Sanctions Act and House Resolution 212, (17 August 2001), [www.house.gov/mckinney/news/pr010817]

“Murderers are not martyrs. Targeting civilians is immoral, whatever the excuse. Terrorists have declared war on civilisation, and states like Iran, Iraq and Syria are inspiring and financing a culture of political murder and suicide bombing ... These countries are not only trying to kill people outside their countries, but they are repressing their own people. They have an active program of denying the rights of the people in those three countries, that is vicious, repressive and, unfortunately successful.”¹⁷²

The Defence Department has its own motivations for adopting a hard line position. The potential nuclear threat from Iran or from terrorist groups sponsored by Iran is their main justification for the proposed anti ballistic weapons shield. They must show that countries like Iran have the capability and desire to attack the US in this way to justify to the government and people that the shield is a legitimate and necessary use of taxpayers money. The desire of the Defence Department to maintain its budget for weapons programmes is linked to the existence of a large military-industrial complex in America. Keeping alive the notion of an Iranian threat to the US, Israel and the region justifies military support and arms sales to Israel and other Gulf countries. Post the Cold War when domestic demand for military hardware declined dramatically, sales abroad have kept the massive military industry in the US profitable and prevented cutbacks that would have led to large job losses. The success of the Defence Department at keeping defence issues high on the agenda is indicated by the fact that the defence budget has remained at Cold War levels. Military spending during the Cold War averaged at \$250 billion per year (1994 prices), excluding the Korean and Vietnam War years. In 1994, it had risen to \$280 billion.¹⁷³

Given the direction of policy under Clinton and the oil background of Vice President Cheney, US companies had hoped the Bush Administration would decrease sanctions and restrictions on trade with Iran. This has not occurred. Conversely, within eight months of Bush’s presidency, the ILSA was renewed for five years with little objection from the administration. They merely insisted on a review of the act after two years. The Bush presidency has been sympathetic to Defence Department ideas. They have firmly supported the anti ballistic missile project and seem to view the potential threat

¹⁷² Rumsfeld, D., DoD New Briefing, (Federal New Service, 1 April 2002), [www.defenselink.mil/news/Apr2002/t04012002_t0401sd]

¹⁷³ Kegley, C.W. & Wittkopf, E.R., *American Foreign Policy*, p.306

from Iran in a similar way. Furthermore they wish to see domestic oil production increase and therefore use the Iranian threat to stability in the Middle East as justification for projects such as oil exploration in Alaska. The Financial Times reported in July 2001: “despite promising a policy review on Iran by June and openly questioning the effectiveness of sanctions in general, the Bush administration has put missile defence and domestic oil exploration ahead of Iran.” The article quotes Gary Sick: “they have taken no steps that might in any way undercut their objectives. They have to justify National Missile Defence with the Iran threat and they are focusing on US [oil] production and don’t want to undercut that domestic push.”¹⁷⁴

4.1.3 The Israeli Lobby

As has been shown, the Defence Department and the Bush presidency have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo on Iran and are unlikely to challenge the general policy consensus. The other facets of the policymaking system, such as Congress, the media, public opinion and the State Department are kept within the fold primarily by the Israeli Lobby. They play on preconceptions of Iran and on feelings towards Israel and use the system to maintain what can only be described as a Gramscian style hegemony over US policy. Not only do they push for policy forcibly, but also use ideological tools, which make policymakers and others believe unquestioningly in a specific image of and therefore policy towards Iran.

What is the Israeli Lobby

The Israeli Lobby is an amalgamation of groups within the United States whose aim is to maintain and improve relations between the US and Israel. Their objective is to maintain the security, well being and economic prosperity of Israel. Therefore issues of concern include the preservation of US economic and military assistance to Israel, justifying Israeli actions within the region and monitoring the behaviour and consequent US policy towards its adversaries. It is important to note that the Israeli Lobby is an American lobby and therefore the emphasis is very much on the promotion of shared

¹⁷⁴ Hoyos, C. & Dinmore, G., ‘Bush cool on trying to improve relations with Iran’, *The Financial Times*, (25 July 2001), [globalarchive.ft.com]

interests. In other words they aim to persuade the US government that working in Israel's interest also serves American interests.

It is termed the Israeli Lobby because not all components of the Lobby are Jewish. Formidable Jewish organisations such as the Council of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organisations or the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) are included, but the Jewish Lobby has also formed alliances with groups such as the Christian right and, in the past, the civil rights movement. The growth of evangelism in the US has provided the Israeli Lobby with a prolific and receptive constituency within the US 'Bible Belt'.

In the context of America's foreign policy, the most significant group in the Israeli Lobby is AIPAC. Formed in 1954 as the American Zionist Committee for Public Affairs, David Goldberg describes its task as "co-ordinating and directing public actions "on behalf of the American Zionist movement, bearing upon relations with governmental authorities, with a view to maintaining and improving friendship and good will between the United States and Israel."¹⁷⁵ Since those early days, AIPAC has grown into a highly organised, well-funded and hugely powerful force in American politics. The unswerving nature of US policy towards Israel despite criticism from many around the world has led some to believe that policy has become dictated by AIPAC. Certainly its power in Congress is infamous and has led to the description of Capitol Hill as "Israeli occupied territory."¹⁷⁶ It is well known as the one of the most powerful interest groups in Washington, second only to the American Association of Retired Persons.¹⁷⁷ The BBC correspondent, Stephan Sackur describes AIPAC as "the Arnold Schazenager of the lobbying world."¹⁷⁸ This tremendous influence comes despite Jews only making up 2% of the US population and membership of AIPAC numbering only 60,000 out of 5.6 million American Jews.¹⁷⁹

The Israeli Lobby and particularly AIPAC lobbies the US government on Iran for a number of reasons. Iran's financial and moral support for the Palestinians, especially

¹⁷⁵ Goldberg, D.H., Foreign Policy and Ethnic Interest Groups: American and Canadian Jews Lobby for Israel, (Greenwood Press, London, 1990), p.16

¹⁷⁶ Sackur, Stephen, 'A Lobby to Reckon With', (BBC Radio 4, 7 May 2002)

¹⁷⁷ 'Briefing: America's Jewish Lobby', The Week, (27 April 2002)

¹⁷⁸ Sackur, Stephen, 'A Lobby to Reckon With', (BBC Radio 4, 7 May 2002)

¹⁷⁹ 'Briefing: America's Jewish Lobby', The Week, (27 April 2002)

Palestinian militant groups is a direct threat to Israeli interests, both its security and moral legitimacy. Iran consistently condemns Israeli policy in the 'occupied territories' and formerly in Lebanon. Under no circumstances does AIPAC want these views accepted or even aired in Washington. Furthermore, Iranian rhetoric that calls for the elimination of Israel and the suspicions that Iran intends to gain advanced missile and eventually nuclear missile capability is useful to AIPAC to justify continued aid to Israel. This amounts to almost \$3 billion a year, two-thirds of which is military aid. Israel is the largest recipient in the world of US aid, taking up 20% of the US's foreign aid budget.¹⁸⁰ During the Cold War, Israel could promote itself as the last front before the Soviet dominated Arab world. Now Israel has to point to the threat of Islamism, particularly emanating from Iran, as the reason why they need huge military spending and continued moral support. They claim to need US help to fend off encroaching Islamists, bent on the destruction of their peaceful, democratic state. The potential threat from Iran is therefore exaggerated by AIPAC before being widely disseminated in Washington.

A recent example of Israeli influence on US policy towards Iran is highlighted in an Economist article discussing why Iran was included in President Bush's 'axis of evil'. A Likud Party elder apparently said the inclusion was "music to Israeli ears."¹⁸¹ According to the article, "Israel has been plugging away for years, publicly and diplomatically and through friends in Washington, on the dangers it fears from Iran."¹⁸² AIPAC has been central to this process. As a senior official is quoted as saying, "the Americans never needed us for the facts ... but we tried to keep Iran on the agenda."¹⁸³ The points to a major function of AIPAC which is to provide timely and specific information to government institutions, constantly reminding them of problems from Iran.

Evidence of AIPAC's power in Washington is substantial, especially on policy towards Iran. At AIPAC's annual conference in 1995, President Clinton addressed the crowd promising to "contain Iran as the principle state sponsor of terrorism in the world" and he thanked the Israelis for "drawing our attention to Iran's history of supporting

¹⁸⁰ Sackur, Stephen, 'A Lobby to Reckon With', (BBC Radio 4, 7 May 2002), 'Briefing: America's Jewish Lobby', *The Week*, (27 April 2002) & Proglor, J.A., 'The Utility of Islamic Imagery in the West: An American Case Study', (Winter 1997), [www.ireland.iol.ie/~afifi/Articles/image]

¹⁸¹ 'Influence or Confluence?', *The Economist*, (9 February 2002)

¹⁸² *Ibid*

terrorism.”¹⁸⁴ At the 2002 conference half the US Senate and ninety members of the lower house attended, showing that support for AIPAC is not merely tacit but active. Recent policy drives by AIPAC have included the extension of the ILSA and undermining Iran’s positive contribution to the war in Afghanistan. Former Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, Ambassador Robert Pelletreau discussed the renewal of ILSA in a speech to the American-Iranian Bar Association in March 2002: “Despite the fact that this legislation has been unenforceable during its initial five years, the powerful American Israel Public Affairs Committee had decided to make renewal a priority issue in 2001 as a way of highlighting both its own influence and Iran’s continuing, unremitting hostility to Israel.”¹⁸⁵ After a very organised campaign of letter writing, press statements, articles and testimonies to both Houses, the ILSA extension was approved by 96 votes to 2 in the Senate and 409 votes to 6 in the House.¹⁸⁶ In the Committee for International Relations Subcommittee for the Middle East and South Asia hearing on ILSA renewal, two out of the four witnesses were part of the Israeli Lobby. Howard Kohr, executive director of AIPAC and Patrick Clawon from the Washington Institute of Near East Policy both gave evidence. The latter institution is known for its Israeli sympathies and produces many of the academic justifications for Israeli policy. Staggeringly, of the four witnesses only one represented the opposing camp and so for some, the Act was a done deal, initiated and pushed through by the Israeli Lobby.

Why is the Israeli Lobby so influential?

The influence that the Israeli Lobby has over American policy is only disputed at the margins. It is widely recognised that its influence is formidable to say the least, especially on policy towards Iran.¹⁸⁷ There are many reasons why this is the case. Firstly American society and consequently government is for a number of reasons sympathetic to Israel. The table below, quoted by David Goldberg, shows that

¹⁸³ *Ibid*

¹⁸⁴ Proglor, J.A., ‘The Utility of Islamic Imagery in the West: An American Case Study’, (Winter 1997), [www.ireland.iol.ie/~afifi/Articles/image]

¹⁸⁵ Pelletreau, R.H., ‘How Iran Wound Up on the Axis of Evil’, (draft of a speech given to the American-Iranian Bar Association, 12 March 2002)

¹⁸⁶ ‘Containing Iran’, (AIPAC, 6 August 2001), [www.aipac.org/result.cfm?id=1192]

¹⁸⁷ I conducted a number of interviews in Washington and New York with various former officials, members of the energy lobby, academics and commentators on Iran, all of whom named the Israeli Lobby as the primary obstacle to American-Iranian rapprochement.

sympathy for the Israeli cause in America has always outnumbered sympathies for the Arab viewpoint and over time has increased:

American Popular Sympathies for Jews/Israel and Arabs, 1947-1988¹⁸⁸:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Jews</u>	<u>Arabs</u>	<u>Both, Neither, Don't Know</u>
Nov 1947	24%	12%	64%
June 1948	34%	12%	54%
April 1957	33%	17%	50%
7 June 1967	56%	4%	40%
Aug 1970	47%	6%	47%
Oct 1973	39%	4%	56%
Sep 1978	42%	12%	46%
June 1982	39%	6%	52%
Sep 1982	32%	28%	40%
Jan 1988	47%	15%	38%
May 1988	44%	13%	43%

Similar ideological standpoints, shared heritage and guilt over the holocaust provide the main explanations for this phenomenon. However it is interesting to note the proportion of American society who do not have a preference. This implies that the majority of the population are indifferent to the conflict. In turn this implies that the American government's steadfast support for Israel is primarily elite driven.

There are a number of features common to both America and Israel, which have enhanced understanding and friendship between the two. America and Israel have a shared heritage both in religious and sociological terms. Both originate in the Judo-Christian tradition, which not only gives both societies shared views on morality and political systems, but common literature supports the very legitimacy and divine nature of Israel. Christian evangelists believe that the taking of Jerusalem by the Jews is an

¹⁸⁸ Goldberg, D.H., Foreign Policy and Ethnic Interest Groups: American and Canadian Jews Lobby for Israel, (Greenwood Press, London, 1990), p.27

essential precursor to the coming of the Messiah.¹⁸⁹ The pastor of the Cornerstone Church in the US summed up the strength of feeling towards Israel within the Christian right in an address to 10,000 followers and millions of television viewers:

“God entered into an eternal covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that the nation of Israel would belong to the Jewish people forever and forever means 2002, 3002, 4002 because forever is forever. Jerusalem is the eternal capital of the Jewish state not since Camp David but since King David – that’s 3000 years ago ... We’re going to stand by Israel through thick or thin until terrorists and terrorism are crushed.”¹⁹⁰

Within American society as a whole sympathy is also expressed towards Israel because of shared identification with common myths, most notably the pioneering or settler mentality. Just as the puritans believed that the colonisation of America was God’s will, despite the existence of a native people, the colonisation of Palestine is seen in the same way. Just as formerly in the American Mid-West, Israel is seen as frontier state, open to and battling with the native savages, determined to fight God’s work. Goldberg agrees, pointing to the following explanations for pro-Israeli sentiment: “feelings of Christian guilt concerning the European Holocaust; the image of Israel’s ‘David’ to the Arab world’s ‘Goliath’; and the similarity of Israel’s pioneering spirit and religious heritage to that of the American frontier experience.”¹⁹¹

Sympathies towards Israel because they are on the front line against Islamic militants has undoubtedly risen after September 11th. AIPAC has not been shy of exploiting these feelings, especially to justify the recent incursions into the ‘occupied territories’. Successful analogies have been drawn between America’s global war on terrorism and Israel’s ongoing battle against Palestinian militants. AIPAC published comments from both Senator Mitch McConnell and Congressman Tom Lantos in its Near East Report in November 2001¹⁹²:

¹⁸⁹ Razi, G.H., ‘The Nature and Sources of US Opposition to Iran: A Framework for Foreign Policy Analysis’, *The Iranian Journal for International Affairs*, vol. 10, no. 3, (1998), p.254

¹⁹⁰ Sackur, Stephen, ‘A Lobby to Reckon With’, (BBC Radio 4, 7 May 2002)

¹⁹¹ Goldberg, D.H., *Foreign Policy and Ethnic Interest Groups: American and Canadian Jews Lobby for Israel*, (Greenwood Press, London, 1990), p.24

¹⁹² ‘Solid Support’, (AIPAC, 5 November 2001), [www.aipac.org/result.cfm?id=1222]

“Israel has the experience, dedication and freedom that is absolutely necessary to prevail over these fanatics ... We must stand arm in arm with our ally.”

(McConnell, 24 October 2001)

“[It is] the ultimate of hypocrisy [for the State Department to criticize Israel’s efforts to fight terrorism ... I ask Powell whether Israel,] a democratic ally and a friend [is] entitled to pursue the terrorists who act against them exactly the same way we are entitled to pursue Osama bin Laden and his ilk.”

(Lantos, 24 October 2001)

Most strategists in the US system believe that Israel’s democratic system makes it a reliable and steadfast ally in the region. AIPAC is well aware that the US would be loathe to do anything to undermine this strategic alliance.

A further explanation for AIPAC’s influence, which in part explains why the US government is so receptive to AIPAC is the fact that there has been consistently a disproportionate number of American Jews in top positions in government. Within the Bush Administration, major players in foreign policy are Paul Wolfowitz, Richard Perle and Douglas Feith. All three are Jewish. The Democrat member of Congress, Joe Lieberman is also closely involved in foreign policy and is also Jewish.¹⁹³ Within the Clinton Administration, both the Secretary of State, Madeline Albright and the Secretary of Defence William Cohen have Jewish roots. Leading members of Clinton’s National Security Council including the director, Sandy Berger and the Middle East director, Martin Indyk, were also Jewish. Interestingly, the latter was the author of the dual containment policy towards Iran and Iraq. In fact most of Clinton’s NSC members were Jewish.¹⁹⁴ Furthermore Clinton’s vice president, Al Gore was well known to be more pro-Israeli than Clinton. Gholam Razi, writing in the Iranian Journal of International Affairs in 1998 describes Jewish domination of the Clinton Administration as “completing the hijacking of the American government as Congress has already long been under their [the Jewish ‘Friends of Israel’] influence.”¹⁹⁵ Likewise, particularly

¹⁹³ ‘Lexington: No Schmooze with the Jews’, *The Economist*, (6 April 2002)

¹⁹⁴ See Razi, G.H., ‘The Nature and Sources of US Opposition to Iran: A Framework for Foreign Policy Analysis’, *The Iranian Journal for International Affairs*, vol. 10, no. 3, (1998), p.252

¹⁹⁵ Razi, G.H., ‘The Nature and Sources of US Opposition to Iran: A Framework for Foreign Policy Analysis’, *The Iranian Journal for International Affairs*, vol. 10, no. 3, (1998), p.249

amongst the Bush Administration, Christian Zionists are highly influential. George W. Bush himself is openly devote.

Having said that, no member of the American government has ever openly promoted a policy that damaged American interests in favour of Israel. Whilst it is true that Israel is able to exert considerable influence on government through its friends in high places, it is not the case that they can dictate policy. As the criticism of Sharon over the reoccupation of Palestinian territories shows, the American government are able, and do on occasion, to go against the Israeli position. The priority for American officials will always be American not Israeli interests. AIPAC and others only benefit if interests are deemed to be shared.

The final reason why AIPAC is so influential is the US government structure, which makes it easy for highly organised groups like AIPAC to exploit it. AIPAC is a centralised organisation with a substantial budget. In the last three years, individual members have given over \$3 million, averaging at \$70,000 per person.¹⁹⁶ Much of this money is then distributed via Political Action Committees (PAC's) to the election campaigns of Congressmen. According to *The Week*, "hundreds of members of both parties receive substantial pro-Israel contributions."¹⁹⁷ This helps give the Israeli Lobby their disproportional influence. Campaign contributions are a significant feature of American politics because of the number, length and enormous cost of elections. Furthermore campaigns are not centrally controlled by a party as they are in countries such as the UK. It is therefore largely up to individuals to fund their own election campaigns, leaving them much more receptive to donors such as the Israeli Lobby.

The reason that AIPAC is so influential on the Iranian issue is because they are merely reinforcing already established stereotypes. It would be very difficult to persuade the public and policy makers of an entirely new image of Iran, but AIPAC can, with comparative ease, play on the image Iran already has in the minds of most Americans. The basis of the hegemony of opinion towards Iran came from America's past experiences and views on Islam (discussed above). AIPAC merely has to work to maintain this image, using the dissemination of relevant information. As Gary Sick

¹⁹⁶ 'Briefing: America's Jewish Lobby', *The Week*, (27 April 2002), p.11

¹⁹⁷ 'Briefing: America's Jewish Lobby', *The Week*, (27 April 2002), p.11

points out, “they are pushing on an open door.”¹⁹⁸ Stances taken against Iran is an easy vote winner. The lack of public knowledge and interest in Iran means an individual is unlikely to object to their congressman voting against Iran. Conversely what little they do know on the subject is more likely to lead to approval of a tough position.

AIPAC is also disproportionately influential on Iran because there is no other significant lobby group present in the system. There is a substantial Iranian Diaspora in America but they are divided and disorganised. Arab lobby groups such as the Arab American Institute or American Muslims for Jerusalem do exist but they find it difficult to challenge the influence of AIPAC. The latter’s director, Khalid Tirani said of access to Congress: “the doors are always open but the minds rarely are ... It is really an uphill battle especially with the efforts of the other side that is very well financed and very well organised.”¹⁹⁹ The only other area of lobbying is from energy interests. Oil and gas companies and associated interests however, find it difficult to fight against the moral legitimacy of AIPAC. When they push for opening up of trade with Iran, they leave themselves open to accusations of worrying just about profits and not about world security and human rights. The negative image in US society of big business such as oil companies does not help their cause.

Furthermore President Bush has shown very little interest in policy towards Iran. AIPAC traditionally succeeds, through its links in Congress, only if the President does not get too involved. Ultimately AIPAC cannot force the President to act if he feels it is strongly against the US interest. “AIPAC like all ethnic pressure groups, is good at getting its way on things that presidents don’t care much about.”²⁰⁰ Therefore issues like Iran, which are actually on the periphery of problems in the Middle East and weapons proliferation, are easily manipulated by outside interests. Gary Sick believes US isolation of Iran has occurred because Iran is not a significant threat. He argues that if it were then the US would have to deal with the issue.²⁰¹ AIPAC was much less successful at maintaining isolation of Iran during the latter years of the Clinton administration at just the time when President Clinton began to take an active interest in the possibility of engagement. With no similar initiatives from Bush, AIPAC has more of a free reign.

¹⁹⁸ Sick, G., Columbia University, (New York, 11 March 2002)

¹⁹⁹ Sackur, Stephen, ‘A Lobby to Reckon With’, (BBC Radio 4, 7 May 2002)

²⁰⁰ ‘Lexington: No Schmooze with the Jews’, *The Economist*, (6 April 2002)

How is the policy monopoly formed and maintained?

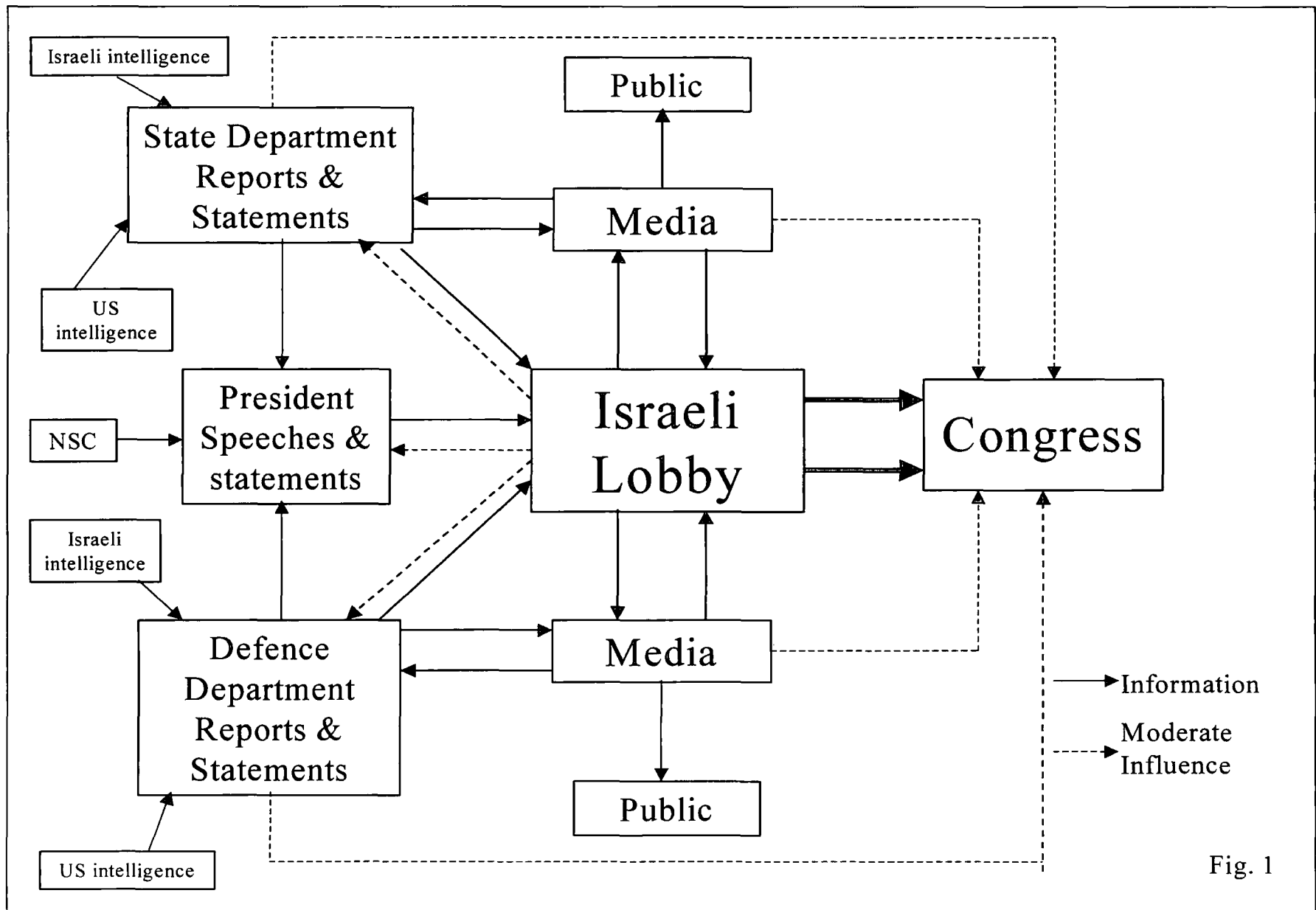
When, in the case of Iran, there is such an enormous gap between Iranian stated policy, the opinions of others in the international scene such as Europe and the American position, the question must be asked, why is the American government so adamant its view of Iran is correct? The reality is that the hegemony, which has been building up over the years, is so strong that there are few in Washington prepared to voice criticism and certainly no one prepared to listen.

Just as the US strives for supremacy in the world using both hegemony and domination, AIPAC operates in the same way in Washington. AIPAC works to persuade policymakers of an image of Iran and if that fails then they use economic coercion. Ultimately however, AIPAC recognises that they can be much more effective using hegemony rather than domination. If AIPAC is seen by the wider public and officials to be dominating the system, then they will be resented. Domination of policy by one group would be viewed as undemocratic and therefore illegitimate. AIPAC's success therefore lies in Washington and America's belief in AIPAC's views and objectives. When AIPAC provides a certain piece of information or pressures for a certain policy, the recipient largely sees it as 'right' or 'given' and does not question the motivations or reliability of the source. Malcolm Honelie, who runs the Council of Presidents of Major Jewish Organisations, responds to the accusation that the Israeli Lobby has a disproportionate influence on the policy system by saying: "people look for sinister motivations and also its conspiratorial approach which are non existent. The reason that Americans support the policies the US has and that why Congress by overwhelming majority support Israel is because they believe in it. It's because they agree with it, because the cause resonates with them."²⁰² The hegemony is perpetuated by the existence of underlying beliefs and perceptions that are manipulated and reinforced by AIPAC, the media and the US government in a never ending vicious circle.

Figure 1. is a representation of the way the hegemony on policy towards Iran operates [see fig. 1]. The State Department and Defence Department release reports or make

²⁰¹ Sick, G., Columbia University, (New York, 11 March 2002)

²⁰² Sackur, Stephen, 'A Lobby to Reckon With', (BBC Radio 4, 7 May 2002)



statements on Iran based on US and Israeli intelligence. Likewise the President, following the advice of his advisors and government departments, will make speeches or give briefings. Elements of these statements or reports are picked up by the media and the Israeli Lobby. The media takes a press release, simplifies it and reproduces it in slogan form. A typical example of this is the media reporting of State Department Patterns of Global Terrorism Reports. The media uses sound bites such as 'Iran is the number one state sponsor of terrorism,' which implies to the lay reader that Iran is the primary cause of terrorism. These over simplified media reports provide information directly to the public and to varying degrees influence Congress and other politicians. Likewise, the Israeli Lobby focuses in on relevant parts on the reports, extracting supporting material and often exaggerating it. These edited extracts are then used to justify arguments to Congress and re-released back into the public domain via their own highly organised PR mechanism. The Israeli Lobby will also pick up news stories on Iran from the media in the same way. They extract elements from articles, passing only the edited version onto Congress and back to the media. The media also uses the Israeli Lobby's own information service and testimonies in Congressional hearings to produce articles on Iran. These articles go on to influence the public and Congress and are again used by the Israeli Lobby to justify policy towards Iran. And so the circle repeats.

Put more simply, the Israeli Lobby acts as collector and distributor of information on Iran. The Israeli Lobby gathers in information from various sources and then edits it to fit their purpose. They then use their highly efficient organisation to disseminate the information to the already receptive audiences of the Congress, media and public. In this way the Israeli Lobby constantly reinforces conceptions of Iran and provides constant justification and reassurance to Washington and the wider public that American policy on Iran is unquestionably right. David Goldberg says that "AIPAC acts as a conduit of information and attitudes between the American Jewry, official Washington, and the broader American domestic political environment on matters of concern to its constituency."²⁰³

Gramsci points to the necessity of intellectuals in the creation and maintenance of an hegemony. In this case the Israeli Lobby and those allied to their way of thinking are the intellectuals, successfully disseminating a particular view of Iran. According to

²⁰³ Goldberg, D.H., Foreign Policy and Ethnic Interest Groups: American and Canadian Jews Lobby for Israel, (Greenwood Press, London, 1990), p.17

Gramsci's these intellectuals could be anyone from the media, academia, politicians, clergy or anyone who has the standing and ability to influence or educate others. For the reasons discussed, the Israeli Lobby is in a very good position to educate Washington on Iran and does it to great effect.

The Israeli Lobby disseminates information and therefore maintains its hegemony using a number of distinct methods. Academics affiliated to the Lobby such as those in the Washington Institute of Near East Policy research and produce articles that are printed, not only in their own publications, but also in other academic journals. This gives the information published or a position taken by the author a certain legitimacy. Articles and books produced by academics such as Patrick Clawson, Michael Eisenstadt and Anthony Cordesman consistently support the Israeli Lobby line.²⁰⁴ Information is thus put into the academic domain and used by students and professors alike the world over. These academics would undoubtedly refute that they work for the Israeli Lobby, arguing that they are independent and objective. This only goes to show how successful the hegemony is. If intellectuals recognised that they were themselves acting within an ideology, then the hegemony would fail. It would become merely propaganda. The ideology would become a viewpoint, rather than a representation of reality.

As well as using affiliated institutions to publish information, organisations such as AIPAC also have their own publications. The most effective is the Near East Report. The Near East Report is designed to report on events affecting AIPAC's agenda. David Goldberg says: "through the distribution of the Near East Report and other research papers and memoranda, AIPAC seeks to maintain its credibility as a source of accurate information and reasoned analysis of US policy."²⁰⁵ Articles in the Near East Report tend to state the facts as AIPAC sees them. They avoid emotive rhetoric, choosing to use quotes and statistics. AIPAC therefore puts information into the public domain that on the face of it seems factual and therefore indisputable. The bias occurs in their selection and editing of material, the sources of which are not always clear and transparent. Take AIPAC's reporting of a conference held in Tehran in support of the

²⁰⁴ See Clawson, P., 'The Continuing Logic of Dual Containment', *Survival*, Vol. 40 (1998), pp. 33-48; Cordesman, A., 'Iranian Force Trends', (Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1 February 2002), [www.washingtoninstitute.org]; Pipes, D. & Clawson, P., 'Ambitious Iran, Troubled Neighbours,' *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 72, no. 1, (1993), pp.124-141; Cordesman, A. & Hashim, A., *Iran Under Khatami: a political, economic and military assessment*, (Westview, Oxford, 1997) & Eisenstadt, M., 'Living with a Nuclear Iran', *Survival*, vol. 41, no. 3 (1999)

Palestinians as an example [see appendix].²⁰⁶ The title of the article, “Conference of Hate” immediately sets the tone. The article then goes on to quote emotive extracts from the conference. These extracts are presented as official Iranian positions. A wider view of the Iranian position presents a considerably more complicated picture than the over simplified version published by AIPAC.

As part of its campaign to get the ILSA renewed, AIPAC produced many articles ‘proving’ the terrorist and proliferation of weapons threat from Iran. One article, “Fateh Fired” describes the testing of a short range missile operated from a mobile launcher [see appendix].²⁰⁷ The missile testing was widely reported in the Iranian press, but the Near East Report chose to draw America’s attention to the potential danger if Iran passed the technology to Hezbollah in southern Lebanon. There is no evidence presented that supports the idea that the missile was intended for terrorist purposes but the inference is enough. The article also discusses Iran’s other missile capabilities and implies that they are substantial. Many analysts however, such as Gary Sick, believe AIPAC’s views on Iran’s military capabilities are heavily exaggerated to grab headlines.²⁰⁸ There is no doubt that AIPAC’s continuous claims that Iran is a few years away from nuclear missiles has repeatedly been shown to be exaggerated and false, but such claims do attract considerable attention.²⁰⁹ The article concludes with a direct reference to the benefits of ILSA, saying that even Congress is concerned enough with Iran’s missile development to support an extension. The question must be asked however, without information and pressure from AIPAC, would Congress really be so concerned?

After September 11th, reports began to appear in the Near East Report associating Iran indirectly with Al Qaeda and making sure Iran was put on the ‘War on Terrorism’ agenda. A report entitled “State Sponsors Held Accountable for Terrorism” is a typical example of the way AIPAC uses association, inference and careful editing to put its point across [see appendix].²¹⁰ An extract of a speech made by President Bush is printed, ending with the words: “Either you are with us or against us, or you are with the

²⁰⁵ Goldberg, D.H., Foreign Policy and Ethnic Interest Groups: American and Canadian Jews Lobby for Israel, (Greenwood Press, London, 1990), p.17

²⁰⁶ ‘Conference of Hate’, (AIPAC, 14 May 2001), [www.aipac.org/result.cfm?id=1126]

²⁰⁷ ‘Fateh Fired’, (AIPAC, 11 June 2002), [www.aipac.org/result.cfm?id=1152]

²⁰⁸ Sick, G., Columbia University, (New York, 11 March 2002)

²⁰⁹ One such claim is featured in AIPAC Briefing Book, (downloaded 1 Feb 2002), [www.aipac.org]

terrorists. From this day forward, any nation that continues to harbour or support terrorism will be regarded by the United States as a hostile regime.” No mention of Iran was made in President Bush’s speech, but the article goes on to quote carefully edited extracts from the US State Department, the World Tribune, the WorldNet Daily and the Los Angeles Times as evidence of Iran’s rising sponsorship of terrorism, especially anti Israeli. The inference is clear: Iran is one of those regimes that President Bush views as hostile to the US. In fact in the weeks following September 11th, when this article was published, Iran was viewed by the US administration as being remarkably constructive on the war on terrorism. Furthermore, as has been discussed in detail in the previous section, Iran’s support for terrorism had been declining not rising. An article was also published in October discussing the links between Hezbollah and Al Qaeda, once again directly implicating Iran [see appendix].²¹¹ These articles were part of a larger campaign by AIPAC, who were keen to undermine Iran’s improving relationship with the US after September 11th.

The Israeli Lobby informs Congress in a number of ways. Firstly they appear as witnesses at relevant congressional hearings. As the hearing on the extension of ILSA showed, this can be extremely effective. However at an earlier stage, lobbying of individual members of Congress on various issues and Bills also takes place. AIPAC has six registered lobbyists who visit every member of Congress at least once a year.²¹² If a member of Congress needs particular attention, AIPAC will use its extensive network to get prominent individuals within a particular constituency to approach the member of Congress on a local level. These individuals are usually Christian or Jewish leaders with much sway in the community and therefore on the member of Congress. When there is a specific campaign under way, such as the extension of the ILSA, AIPAC will write letters and brief politicians to make sure every member of Congress is aware of the facts as AIPAC sees them.²¹³

Finally, the inclusion of the Christian right in the Israeli Lobby provides another platform for the dissemination of information. Church leaders regularly promote the

²¹⁰ ‘State Sponsors Held Accountable for Terrorism’, (AIPAC, 24 September 2001), [www.aipac.org/result.cfm?id=1208]

²¹¹ ‘Deadly Connection’, (AIPAC, 8 October 2001), [www.aipac.org/result.cfm?id=1209]

²¹² ‘Briefing: America’s Jewish Lobby’, *The Week*, (27 April 2002), p.11

²¹³ Dr Morton made available an open letter sent to all Senators, which she claims was drafted by AIPAC [see appendix]. Certainly, even down to the order of the letter, it seems remarkably similar to Howard Kohr, Executive Director of AIPAC’s testimony to the House.

religious legitimacy of Israel as opposed to 'evil' Islamic opposition. The distinction between the 'good' of Christian Zionism and the 'evil' of regimes like Iran is continuously perpetuated by this powerful group in American society. It is no mistake for example that President Bush chose to use the words "axis of evil" in his State of the Union speech.²¹⁴ Not only would it have resonated effectively across the nation, but the president is the product of that very Christian ideology. Such language would not have seemed strong or inappropriate to him or the listening public.

At the margins of its hegemony the Israeli Lobby, particularly AIPAC is able to use its economic clout to coerce politicians. AIPAC's organisational and financial strength means it has the capacity to make or break political careers. Four or five times over the last twenty years AIPAC has used its PACs to pursue members of Congress who have voted against their line, pouring money into their opponents campaigns who subsequently beat them.²¹⁵ The Week discusses the case of Charles Percy, a Republican on the Senate foreign relations committee in the early 80s:

"[He] won awards from Jewish groups for his devotion to the cause. But when he started questioning Israel's policy on the West Bank, Jewish groups around the country, under AIPAC's guidance, started distributing flyers denouncing him as Israel's biggest enemy. Funds poured into the coffers of his rival, Paul Simon, and Percy was duly defeated in 1984. 'All the Jews in America, from coast to coast, gathered to oust Percy,' boasted Tom Dine, chairman of AIPAC at the time. 'and American politicians got the message.'"²¹⁶

Given that there is also a considerable lack of interest one way or the other within individual constituencies, it is hardly surprising that congressmen are reluctant to risk voting against AIPAC and in favour of Iran. The benefits would be minimal but the potential costs massive.

This never-ending circle of information, opinion and stereotypes is perpetuated by all actors in the system, fuelled primarily by the Israeli Lobby and media. The same facts

²¹⁴ Bush, G.W., The President's State of the Union Address, (29 January 2002), [www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/01/print/20020129-11]

²¹⁵ Goldberg, J.J., Jewish Power, quoted in Sackur, Stephen, 'A Lobby to Reckon With', (BBC Radio 4, 7 May 2002)

and views are edited, recycled and repeated creating and maintaining a strong consensus of ideas on Iran. As Noam Chomsky points out, “defamation and vilification have become a highly developed art, and its agents have learned that with their easy access to the media, they can construct the most outlandish array of lies and deceit and establish them by mere repetition.”²¹⁷ Views on Iran are repeated and reinforced continuously within the hegemony in Washington. The demonisation of Iran that was established after the Revolution shows no sign of being discredited. The influence of the Israeli Lobby on policy towards Iran means that, whilst relations between Iran and Israel are so antagonistic, rapprochement with America remains near to impossible.

4.2 Challenges to the Status Quo

4.2.1 The Track 2 Process

Within the States, challenges to American policy on Iran are minimal. This is due to the strength of the Israeli Lobby, the weight of ill feeling towards Iran, and also because of the relative weakness of dissenting academics, analysts and interest groups. The main intellectual challenge to policy is from what is known as the ‘Track 2’ process. These academics, journalists and politicians advocate dialogue on a person to person or culture to culture basis. They hope that through communication, trust and understanding between the two states will increase, leading eventually to direct government talks. It is hoped that Iran and the US can work on matters of mutual interest and talk directly about the problems in their relationship. Track 2 is not about building a friendship with Iran but its proponent’s believe that America’s interests are better served by communication, rather than isolation.

Attempts have been made to increase dialogue between leading members of both societies, including meetings between members of Congress and members of the Iranian Majlis. Leading academics, such as Gary Sick at Columbia University, have encouraged Iranian professors to work in the US to further mutual understanding. Organisations such as the ‘Open Society Institute’ in New York (part of the Soros Foundation) and ‘Search for Common Ground’ are also closely involved. OSI’s catch phrase is

²¹⁶ ‘Briefing: America’s Jewish Lobby’, *The Week*, (27 April 2002), p.11

²¹⁷ Chomsky, N., ‘Israel’s Role in US Foreign Policy’, in Lackman, Z. & Beinlin, J. (eds), *Intifada: the Palestinian Uprising V. Israeli Occupation*, (South End Press, Boston, 1989), p.268

particularly appropriate to the Iranian case: “working to strengthen public discourse in areas where one view of an issue dominates all others, precluding alternatives.”²¹⁸ Sporting events between the two nations such as football and wrestling matches have been played and there have even been meetings between American hostages and their former captors.²¹⁹

As far as parliamentary meetings are concerned, each attempt has failed, disrupted by external events. A meeting was in the pipeline before September 11th but was subsequently postponed. In the positive period for American Iranian relations between September 11th and the ‘axis of evil’ speech, a meeting was again put on the agenda. This time, encouragingly, it was initiated by the Iranians, who were keen to capitalise on improvements to the relationship after September 11th. The recent Israeli invasion of the West Bank and the ‘axis of evil’ speech has once again put paid to the meetings. The failure of the US to reign in the Israelis and the threatening rhetoric from the US made it impossible for Iranian reformists to justify domestically dialogue with American politicians. After the furore of the ‘axis of evil’ died down there were more discussions in Iran about communication with the US and even some suggestion that Supreme Leader Khamanei would support a commission set up to investigate the possibility. Iran’s influential former president, Rafsanjani was also said to be supportive. The reformists applied pressure on the conservatives, arguing that “opening a dialogue with Washington – perhaps initially through contacts between Iranian parliamentarians and sympathetic US Congressmen – would be the best way to defuse tensions and perceived American threats to Iran.”²²⁰ However Khamanei soon ended all speculation and firmly vetoed the idea. He was strongly supported by his conservative allies in Qom, who said: “Iran will not hold talks with the United States as long as the US doesn’t change its anti-Iran behaviour and stop the irresponsible statements against Iran.”²²¹ However with the support of the majority of the population, as well as many influential politicians, the idea of informal dialogue between Congress and the Majlis is

²¹⁸ The Open Society Institute Website, [www.soros.org/usprograms/index]

²¹⁹ Ansari, A., ‘Iranian Foreign Policy Under Khatami: Reform and Reintegration’, in *Iran and Eurasia*, Ehteshami, A. & Mohammadi, A. (eds), (Ithaca, Reading, 2000)

²²⁰ BBC Tehran Correspondent, ‘Khamenei rules out US talks’, *BBC News*, (1 May 2002), [news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/English/world/middle_east/newsid_1962000/1962395]

²²¹ ‘Senior Clerics Back Leader’s Ban on Talks With US’, *IRNA*, (27 May 2002), [www.irna.com/en/archive/politic/020527184041.epo]

unlikely to be off the agenda for long. As early as September 2000, an opinion poll in Iran showed that 55% of the population would support restored ties with the US.²²²

The main emphasis of 'Track 2' has always been the promotion of cultural understanding because of the restrictions on political dialogue. Following September 11th, the US made the visa procedure significantly more difficult for visiting Iranians. This has had the effect of making cultural exchanges all the more difficult and unlikely. In the current environment, 'Track 2' is unlikely to force a change in policy. However, its enthusiasts argue that should the environment alter, the groundwork and contacts are already in place. When attitudes do start to shift 'Track 2' can aid and accelerate the process.

4.2.2 Khatami and Domestic Politics in Iran

"The contact between the world of Islam and others, too, suffers from lack of trust, misunderstanding and unseemly interpretations, some of which have historical roots and some others arise from hegemony-seeking relations or the efforts of hegemonists to bring about insidious understandings. In this regard, by bringing about a suitable groundwork for dialogue between civilisations and cultures – with centrality given to [the views of] opinion holders – we must open the way to a fundamental understanding that can serve as the basis for true peace founded on the restoration of the rights of all nations, destroying the climate in which malicious propaganda can affect public opinion."²²³

(President Khatami, speech to the OIC Conference in Tehran, December 1997)

Since his first election victory in 1997, President Khatami has been aware that to integrate successfully into the world, Iran needs to alter its image in the US. Just as in post war Italy, where the economic circumstances should have led to a communist

²²² 'Extending a hand to Satan', *The Economist*, (21 September 2000), [www.economist.com/PrinterFriendly.cfm?Story_ID=374405]

²²³ Khatami, 'Speech to OIC Conference', *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts ME/3099 S1/4*, (11 December 1997)

revolution, the practical and strategic realities of the American Iranian relationship should have led to some kind of rapprochement. In the Italian case, Gramsci believed the revolution failed because the appropriate superstructure did not exist; the people were not educated to believe in Communism. Likewise any kind of American Iranian rapprochement has failed because America and Iran remain ideologically and politically against such a move. Like Gramsci, if America is to accept an Islamic Republic of Iran and if the Iranian people are to accept a dialogue with the US, Khatami can see that ideas must play a greater role. He must persuade the US that Iran is not the ideological and political opponent they perceive.

Khatami's efforts represent the second significant challenge to the hegemony that exists in Washington. He has been trying to alter the negative preconceptions of Iran in the US in two ways. Firstly he has been attempting to persuade Iranians to tone down any antagonistic rhetoric. The Iranian American relationship cannot just be seen in terms of what they do, it must also be seen in terms of what they say. One of the reasons that America still sees Iran as a challenge, despite recent signs of pragmatism, is the confrontational nature of rhetoric emanating from Iran. Foucault believed that language dictates the way people think and therefore how they react. Despite the fact that many of the revolutionary slogans such as 'Death to America' or 'the Great Satan' have now become largely symbolic in Iran, in the US, they remain very damaging. This kind of antagonistic language only supports the already prevalent negative image of Iran. Practical policy changes must therefore be supported by changes in the language used.

Khatami therefore, when 'death to America' is shouted at political rallies, has been known to call on the crowd to stop, arguing that they should talk of life not death.²²⁴ Whilst he had some initial success, frictions between the conservative and reformist factions in Iranian politics have undermined his efforts. The debate about future relations with America has become a political football. Policy towards America symbolises so much of the origins and ethos of the revolution that it is the perfect tool for ideologues to use to criticise the reformers. Not only does criticising America provide the conservative faction with revolutionary credentials, it also provides a means to undermine Khatami politically. The conservatives are only too well aware of the

²²⁴ Barraclough, S., 'Khatami and the Consensual Politics of the Islamic Republic', *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 22, no. 2, (1999), p.12

damage an emotive and provocative statement, such as Israel being 'a cancerous tumour', can cause to Khatami's policies of reconciliation and reintegration.

In an echo of the 'track 2' process, Khatami's second means of altering Iran's image has been to develop understanding of the Islamic Republic abroad. Again his main tool has been language. Travelling widely and conscious of the usefulness of the western media in getting his message across, Khatami has managed to provide the western world with a new discourse on Iran; a discourse that counters all previous stereotypes. Khatami has been at great pains to explain the history and perspectives of Iran using western ideas and language. For example he directly refutes Huntington's thesis calling consistently, not for a 'clash of civilisations' but a 'dialogue of civilisations'. In his interview with CNN in January 1998, broadcast directly to the American people, Khatami drew parallels between the American experience and the Iranian revolutionary project: "four centuries have passed since the beginning of American civilisation, human experience has taught us that prosperous life should hinge on three pillars: religiosity, liberty and justice. These are the assets and aspirations of the Islamic revolution as it enters the 21st century."²²⁵ He argues the case of Islamic democracy by noting that American democracy was and remains based firmly on religious principles.²²⁶ He also went on to discuss some of the history of the American Iranian relationship, attempting to put the revolution and anti American feeling into some rational, historical context.²²⁷ Ansari says: "President Khatami sought to integrate the Iranian historical experience with that of the West and to weave a complex integrative narrative into a single text. Rather than a hegemonic clash, the case was made for a hegemonic synthesis."²²⁸

Such speeches have not only helped people to understand and relate to Iran better, but Khatami has also provided sympathetic western commentators with ideas, information and language they can use to counter the hegemony in the US. Khatami is conscious that he is not directly able to alter the political environment in Washington. Therefore he has concentrated his efforts on the American intelligensia (largely the media and academics), hoping, as Gramsci theorises, that they will spread and consolidate these ideas on Iran further. This is primarily the reasoning behind the 'dialogue of

²²⁵ Khatami, 'Interview with CNN', BBC Summary of World Broadcasts ME/3120 MED/1, (9 January 1998)

²²⁶ Ibid

²²⁷ Ibid

²²⁸ Ansari, A., 'Iranian Foreign Policy under Khatami: Reform and Reintegration', p.51



civilisations' project. In his CNN interview, Khatami called for people to people cultural exchanges and has since promoted much intellectual and cultural contact. The spin off from years of isolation has not only affected Iran politically and economically but they have remained intellectually isolated as well. This has only exacerbated misunderstandings. Through Khatami, Iran is attempting to rewrite the narrative on Iran, hoping to "crack the wall of mistrust"²²⁹ and challenge the monopoly of opinion in the US.

Khatami has had mixed success. Ansari claims: "President Khatami's success in presenting himself, both at home and abroad as a champion of progress, justice and democratic plurality continues unabated and represents the most rapid and dramatic shift in ideological perception and interpretation in recent years. The image of a turbaned mullah, fanatic and dogmatic, which permeated Western perceptions has been transformed in the space of a year."²³⁰ It certainly was the case that the initial response to Khatami from the US was positive. The Clinton Administration began making conciliatory statements and partially lifted sanctions. However, this ceased under the Bush Administration and, since the immediate aftermath of the September 11th attacks, there have been no further significant signs or opportunities for dialogue.

Khatami's efforts are significantly limited by the conflicts within Iran's domestic politics. The more ideological elements in the system have consistently undermined his position with provocative statements and actions, especially towards Israel.²³¹ The supreme leader, Khamenai's immediate response to Khatami's CNN interview, whilst approving of Khatami's criticisms of America, was to reiterate that "negotiations with America and relations with America do not have any benefits at all for the people of Iran ... Negotiations with America and relations with America are harmful to the Iranian people."²³² There are two conflicting voices coming out of Iran and the Americans are clearly unsure which to listen to. The domestic realities in the US make them far more likely to take notice of the threatening, anti-American and anti-Israeli voice. Certainly recent criticism of Iran has concentrated on 'elements' of the Iranian

²²⁹ Said by Khatami in his CNN Interview, BBC Summary of World Broadcasts ME/3120 MED/1, (9 January 1998)

²³⁰ Ansari, A., 'Iranian Foreign Policy under Khatami: Reform and Reintegration', p.55

²³¹ This has been a particular problem for Khatami since the Intifadah because support has been growing for anti Israel policies – it has been difficult for Khatami to condemn outright actions such as the Karine A arms shipment and anti-Israeli slogans and rhetoric

regime. For example, the 2001 Patterns of Global Terrorism Report draws attention to the role of the conservative faction in the support of Palestinian rejectionist groups: "Although some within Iran would like to end this support, hardliners who hold the reigns of power continue to thwart any efforts to moderate these policies."²³³ It is clear that unless the domestic political situation in Iran stabilises, Khatami will continue to find it difficult to convince the US of Iran's sincerity.

Despite their obvious failings, the track 2 process and the reform movement in Iran provide the only route out of the current deadlock. They are the main forces of change. When a system of ideas or perceptions become rigid, solidified and unquestioned they become increasingly unrealistic and contestable. As policy within the US has become more dogmatic, the more easily it is criticised and challenged by track 2, Iran and other governments or commentators. For example, the more rigid present US concerns about Iran have become, the more flaws and inconsistencies have been found. Likewise during the early revolutionary period, when Iran was convinced of the evilness of the US, it was much more easily and convincingly condemned by the rest of the world as irrational. Conversely if a position or idea is ambiguous, it is far more difficult to argue against. Certainty in ideas often leads to ambiguity as certainties become ever more easily challenged.

The American Iranian relationship can be described as a series of certainties and ambiguities, where the periods of ambiguity provide opportunities for rapprochement (See figure 2). As certainty in a policy position reaches a peak, the forces of change become more credible leading to a period of ambiguity. This was seen very clearly during the Clinton Administration. The rigid position of the early Clinton years was successfully challenged by the Khatami movement. Khatami initiated a period of ambiguity that was taken up by Clinton. Khatami understood that change would only occur if America's views on Iran moved from the certain towards the ambiguous, from dogma towards dialogue. This he did by attempting to challenge the certainties of American views of Iran and by attempting to alter the deep rooted views of the US from within Iran. Unfortunately however, antagonistic rhetoric and actions undermined the process, initiating a new period of certainty.

²³² Khamenai, S.A., 'Speech to worshippers at Friday prayers in Tehran on 16th January 1998', BBC Summary of World Broadcasts ME/3128 MED/8, (19 January 1998)

Relationship:

Inflexible

Ambiguous

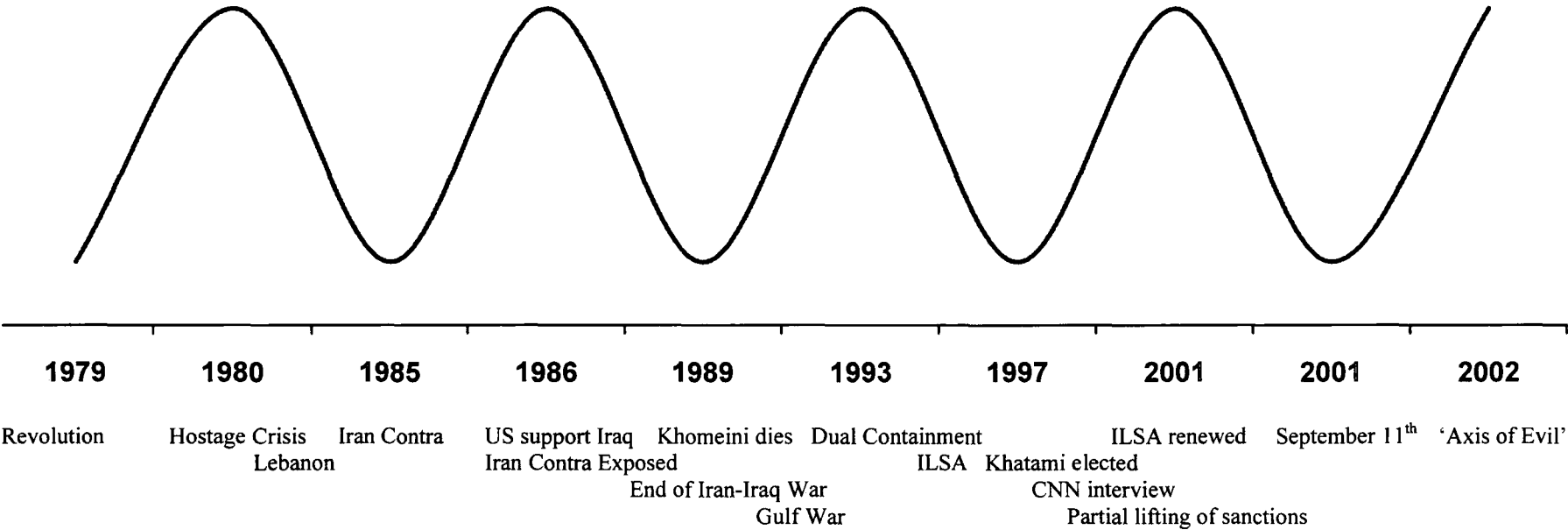


Fig. 2

CASE STUDY: THE AFTERMATH OF SEPTEMBER 11TH

²³³ US State Department, Patterns of Global Terrorism 2001, (May 2002),
[www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/pgtrpt/2001/index]

5. CASE STUDY: THE AFTERMATH OF SEPTEMBER 11TH

Relations between America and Iran have remained intractable over the last twenty years and look set to remain so. Numerous opportunities, numerous conciliations from both sides and numerous efforts have been thwarted. Periods of ambiguity have given way to periods of certainty. The mistrust and misperceptions that exist between the two remain significantly unchallenged. The negative perceptions of Iran gained from historical experience and Islamic and Orientalist stereotypes have been solidified within American society. The atmosphere in Washington not only represents these American perceptions but has also helped to fuel and maintain them. Neither the 'track 2' process nor Khatami have made significant headway in undermining the monopoly of opinion on Iran. Iran itself has not helped the situation. The use of America in domestic Iranian politics has led to conflicting and confusing messages emanating from Tehran.

The reasons for the stalemate have been examined in this thesis. However it is only by looking at them in the context of a practical example, that the extent of the problems can be seen. The attacks of September 11th and the subsequent events show clearly how the ideological conflict, the hegemony in Washington (particularly the influence of Israel) and the domestic political situation in Iran have consistently prevented opportunities for dialogue and reconciliation.

Immediately following the attacks on New York and Washington, Khatami, along with other leading government officials, expressed their horror, sympathy and condemnation. "On behalf of the Iranian government and the nation, I condemn the hijacking attempts and terrorist attack on public centres in American cities which have killed a large number of innocent people. My deep sympathy goes out to the American nation, particularly those who have suffered from the attacks and also the families of the victims. Terrorism is doomed and the international community should stem it and take effective measure in a bid to eradicate it."²³⁴ The people of Iran took to the streets in a massive spontaneous outpouring of sympathy. Even leading figures in the conservative faction openly condemned the attacks leading to a unique consensus of approach

²³⁴ Khatami, 'Response to the September 11th attacks', [www.salamiran.org/Media/Pres_statement]

towards America. For the first time since 1979, the chanting of 'death to America' was not permitted at Friday prayers in Tehran.²³⁵

This move was in part a reflection of genuine horror at what had occurred, in part an attempt to deflect any rash reaction against Iran from the US. However in the main, it was an opportunity for Iran, especially reformist elements, to prove to the US that they had genuinely become a responsible and dependable member of the Islamic community; in other words, the very antithesis of Bin Laden and his associates. Just as Rafsanjani had hoped that Iran's neutrality during the Gulf War of the early 90s would prove to the world that Iran had changed, Khatami hoped Iran's actions after the attacks would help alter Iran's image once and for all.

Iran backed up this rhetoric with constructive action. Although there was significant opposition to joining a US-led coalition against terrorism, Iran expressed the desire to join a UN-led campaign. Khamenei himself was the first cleric in the Muslim world to call for a jihad against terrorism.²³⁶ Khatami called for a meeting of the OIC where collaboration with the EU on fighting terrorism was agreed. When it became clear that the US's response would be strikes on Afghanistan, under its own command, there was criticism from some in Iran, but practical assistance and support was still offered. Iran offered to rescue any downed US pilots, opened the port of Bandar Abbas for humanitarian aid and closed its 560-mile border to prevent any Taliban or al-Qaeda fighters from escaping or gaining fresh supplies. Iran also agreed to take more refugees, despite already caring for the largest refugee population in the world, most from Afghanistan. During the fighting, Iran was instrumental in keeping the 'Northern Alliance' intact and then again instrumental in persuading many of the warlords to accept and support a broad based government during the conference in Bonn. Despite the unhealthy state of Iran's economy, the government also pledged \$530 million over five years to go towards the reconstruction of Afghanistan, the largest amount given by any non first world country.²³⁷

²³⁵ Bozorgmehr, N. & Dinmore, G., 'Iran changes tack in support of US', The Financial Times, (14 September 2001), [globalarchive.ft.com]

²³⁶ Ramazani, R.K., 'Demystifying Iran's Anti-Terrorist Stance', in Jane's Terrorism and Security Monitor, (17 October 2001), [www.american-iranian.org/Pages/Perspectives/Articles/Ramazani]

²³⁷ Khalaf, R. & Dinmore, G., 'America's New Enemy', The Financial Times, (1 February 2002)

In the immediate months, Khatami travelled to America, making known his personal disgust of terrorism. He made speeches outlying his ideas using elements of western philosophy and attacked head on the idea that Bin Laden represented Islam or the Islamic people. He made sure his ideas were reported in the western press, personally giving interviews to papers such as the New York Times. Both the Economist and the New York Times quoted illustrative excerpts of a speech he made to religious leaders in a church in New York:

“Vicious terrorists who concoct weapons out of religion are superficial literalists clinging to simplistic ideas. They are utterly incapable of understanding that perhaps inadvertently, they are turning religion into the handmaiden of the most decadent ideologies. While terrorists purport to be serving the cause of religion and accuse all those who disagree with them of heresy and sacrilege, they are serving the very ideologies they condemn.”²³⁸

The New York Times also favourably reported Khatami’s speech to the UN in November 2001. This included condemnation of the perpetrators of the attacks, criticism of those who portray Islam as a religion opposed to the west and a call to prevent “a clash of civilisations and religions and the spread of hatred.” He argued that Islam was a religion of peace and that the Islamic Republic of Iran was proof that Islamic government can be “a good model for all Islamic countries.”²³⁹

The European response to Iran’s statements and actions was predictably warm. Iran’s initial reaction to the attacks prompted a visit by the UK’s foreign secretary to Tehran, the first since 1979. Jack Straw praised Iran’s “human understanding” and said that he counted the Iranian government among the “decent leaders of the Islamic world.”²⁴⁰ A special envoy from France and both the Italian and German foreign ministers followed. The Financial Times reported at the time that “all expressed satisfaction with their

²³⁸ Reported in ‘Khatami’s View’, *The Economist*, (24 November 2001), [www.economist.com/PrinterFriendly.cfm?Story_ID=876918] and Niebuhr, G., ‘Religion Journal; Iran President Speaks on Faith and Civilization’, *The New York Times*, (17 November 2000), [www.nyt.com]. Full transcript: Khatami, S.M., Complete Transcript: ‘The Role of Religion in the Dialogue of Civilisations’, (Speech made in Cathedral of St. John the Divine, New York City, 12 November 2001)

²³⁹ Sciolino, E., ‘Iran Chief Rejects Bin Laden Message’, *The New York Times*, (10 November 2001), [www.nyt.com]

²⁴⁰ Dinmore, G., ‘Taking delicate steps towards Tehran’, *The Financial Times*, (25 September 2001), [globalachive.ft.com]

meetings, indicating that Iran, despite its public criticism of the US-led attacks on Afghanistan, would play a constructive role in helping to bring stability to its neighbour.”²⁴¹ The US’s initial response was also encouraging. The US expressed gratitude and Iran’s efforts were officially noted by both Congress and the State Department. Iran-watchers began to talk of the possibility of official communication. Ramazani wrote in October 2001: “it can be hoped that the emerging pattern of indirect, subtle and de facto co-operation between Iran and the United States will help to break down the current stalemate in US-Iran relations and will in the long run result in bilateral talks as a prelude to the ultimate resumption of diplomatic relations between the two countries.”²⁴²

Then on January 29th 2002, President Bush gave his annual ‘State of Union’ address. In it, he said:

“Our second goal is to prevent regimes that sponsor terror from threatening America or our friends and allies with weapons of mass destruction. Some of these regimes have been pretty quiet since September the 11th. But we know their true nature. North Korea is a regime armed with missiles and weapons of mass destruction, while starving its citizens. Iran aggressively pursues these weapons and exports terror, while an unelected few repress the Iranian people’s hope for freedom. Iraq continues to flaunt its hostility toward America and to support terror ... States like these and their terrorist allies, constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world. By seeking weapons of mass destruction, these regimes pose a grave and growing danger ... We’ll be deliberate, yet time is not on our side. I will not wait on events, while dangers gather. I will not stand by as peril draws closer and closer. The United States of America will not permit the world’s most dangerous regimes to threaten us with the world’s most destructive weapons.”²⁴³

The attack on Iraq was not unexpected but the inclusion of Iran in these scathing remarks surprised and horrified many. The Europeans and the rest of the coalition against terrorism were quick to state that they would be against any attack on Iran and

²⁴¹ Dinmore, G., ‘Western politicians focus on Iranian position’, The Financial Times, (23 October 2001), [globalarchive.ft.com]

²⁴² Ramazani, R.K., ‘Demystifying Iran’s Anti-Terrorist Stance’, in Jane’s Terrorism and Security Monitor, (17 October 2001), [www.american-iranian.org/Pages/Perspectives/Articles/Ramazani]

warned the US that they were in danger of detrimentally undermining consensus within the coalition. The reaction from Iran was dismay and anger from the reformists and triumphalism from the conservatives. European commentators pointed out that aggressive statements from America merely undermined further reform in Iran and provided ammunition for anti-American conservatives.²⁴⁴ Given all the constructive policies Iran had undertaken since September 11th, why did the US chose to risk damaging the coalition, undermining change in Iran and destroy all hopes of imminent dialogue with Iran? The reality is that a few conciliatory statements and actions were not enough to break down the level of mistrust, animosity and misperceptions in the US. The image of Iran, coupled with the strength of the hegemony in Washington means any opportunity for change is easily undermined and much happened in the intervening months between September 11th and the 'axis of evil' speech to do just that.

Reports emerged that Iran was interfering in the governance of Kabul, favouring previous northern allies. These accusations however were dubious because they came from rival warlords in the south of Afghanistan. More damaging was the US announcement that it had intelligence suggesting that al-Qaeda suspects were being smuggled out of Afghanistan through Iran. This was denied by Iranian officials. As the Intifadah worsened, tensions between Israel and Iran increased. Former president Rafsanjani warned in December 2001 that Muslim countries armed with nuclear weapons could "annihilate" Israel.²⁴⁵ Deeply unpopular and politically sidelined by corruption charges, Rafsanjani however can no longer claim to speak for Iran. On 3rd January 2002 though, the Israelis intercepted a shipment of Iranian arms bound for the Palestinians. The type of weaponry involved clearly breached the Oslo Accords and if successfully delivered, could have significantly escalated the conflict. US intelligence confirmed the Iranian origin of the weapons, claiming that the Revolutionary Guard (IRGC) had been involved. The Iranian government denied knowledge of the shipment and launched an immediate investigation, but the damage was already done. The Bush Administration also continued to claim that Iran was developing nuclear, chemical and

²⁴³ Bush, G.W., The President's State of the Union Address, (29 January 2002), [www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/01/print/20020129-11]

²⁴⁴ The EU's Commissioner for External Affairs, Chris Patten was one to the most vocal critics of Bush's speech, justifying Europe's policy towards Iran and condemning American unilateralism. See articles: Patten, C., 'Jaw-jaw, not war-war', The Financial Times, (15 February 2002) and Richburg, K.B., 'Europe, US diverging on key policy approaches', The Washington Post, (4 March 2002)

²⁴⁵ 'Back into the Dog-House', The Economist, (26 January 2002)

biological weapons, drawing attention to the possibility that they may pass them on to terrorist groups.

It is highly likely that the people smuggling and arms shipment were not authorised by and probably not even known about by the Iranian government, particularly Khatami. Rogue elements within the IRGC, revolutionary ideologues within the regime or 'mafia' style gangs have all been blamed. For the US though, it was enough to prove that Iranian reform was failing. As Pelletreau says, "the spectre of such Iranian actions was powerful enough to override the modest level of practical co-ordination on Afghanistan coming from other parts of the Iranian Government. No longer, President Bush has decided, can the Iranian Government continue to have it both ways, that is, having different parts of the government following inconsistent policies without having to choose between them. Henceforth, the Iranian Government as a whole will be held responsible for the actions of any one of its parts."²⁴⁶

As can be seen from the strength of Bush's speech, these events had a dramatic effect on the American approach. However no other country allied to America followed suit. Indeed, according to the Economist, "just about everyone, except for the American administration, seems to agree that Iran's post-September role in Afghanistan has been mostly constructive."²⁴⁷ Europe in particular continued to maintain that Iran's negative actions were carried out by elements of the regime, which are best contained by engaging and encouraging reform. If the rest of world deemed Iranian actions to be largely insignificant then the American approach cannot be explained solely by Iran's misdemeanours.

Once again, the Israeli Lobby and the Defence Department, playing on already deep rooted suspicions and attitudes were not insignificant to the dramatic U-turn. In fact the actions of Iranian hardliners were so useful to the Israeli Lobby that conspiracy theories began to emerge. People argued that both shared a significant mutual interest in undermining the Khatami project. Immediately after the attacks, the Israeli Lobby in Washington sought to capture the agenda by drawing analogies between Israel's suffering from terrorism and what America was going through. Playing on increased

²⁴⁶ Pelletreau, R.H., 'How Iran Wound Up on the Axis of Evil', (draft of a speech given to the American-Iranian Bar Association, 12 March 2002)

²⁴⁷ 'How not to make a friend of Iran', The Economist, (9 February 2002)

anger and fear of Islamic terrorism, Israel sought to reassert its place as the only true friend of the US in the region. Initially they had very little success. Their efforts came across as an attempt to make cheap political capital and were viewed as inappropriate. People's attention turned from initial shock to trying to explain the reasons why the attacks had happened. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict was one of the possible explanations and efforts turned to finding a solution at any cost. Israeli actions in the 'occupied territories' were consistently criticised and reigned in by the US in an effort to maintain some kind of atmosphere for peace. However, as time passed the Israeli Lobby applied more influence and the atmosphere in Washington changed. Congressman began to openly criticise Bush and the State Department, arguing that Israel fighting terrorism was equally legitimate to the US's war on terrorism.²⁴⁸ The American agenda shifted from finding solutions to the conflict to supporting the dissolution and reform of the Palestinian infrastructure (including its elected President, Arafat), in the name of fighting terrorism.

The Israeli Lobby were horrified to see signs of co-operation from Iran, their nemesis in the region and they did all they could to undermine Iran's influence in Washington. They began to lobby the media and Congress with emotive and exaggerated reports, aimed at putting the idea of a dangerous Iran back into circulation. As early as 24th September 2001, the Washington Institute for Near East Affairs published an article entitled, 'Iran: part of the problem or part of the solution?', cautioning against co-operation with Iran by listing all of Iran's alleged involvement in terrorism since the 1983 Beirut bombings.²⁴⁹ Another report published in AIPAC's Near East Report in November 2001 included a series of vague and speculative claims about Iran's potential weapons capability, portrayed as fact: "intelligence sources have confirmed publicly that Iran's locally produced Shahab-3 intermediate range ballistic missile – ... able to strike anywhere in Israel – has entered full production and is *expected* to be deployed in the near *future*. The missiles *could potentially* be armed with chemical or biological warheads ... During the next decade, Iran's military purchases from the Russians *could* total some \$300 million annually."²⁵⁰ [Italics added]

²⁴⁸ 'Solid Support', Near East Report, (AIPAC, 5 November 2001), [www.aipac.org/result.cfm?id=1222]

²⁴⁹ Clawson, P., 'Iran: Part of the Problem or Part of the Solution?', Policywatch, (The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 24 September 2001), [www.washingtoninstitute.org/watch/Policywatch/policywatch2001/560]

The Economist partially explained Iran's 'apparent reversion to type' in January 2002 as mere Israeli presentation: "the Israelis would dearly like to see Iran a target in America's anti-terrorist campaign. Consequently, Israel made more of Mr Rafsanjani's comments than they merited ... and has presented the seizure of the ship, apparently on its way to deliver missiles to the Palestinians, as evidence of a new terror nexus involving Iran, the Palestinian Authority and Hizbullah."²⁵¹

As the strength of Bush's speech and consequent statements by leading American officials suggest, the Israeli Lobby's efforts were highly effective. Secretary of State Colin Powell followed up Bush's speech in testimony to the House International Relations Committee in February 2002: "We're making it clear to the Iranians that you've got to choose. If you want to be part of a world that's moving forward, it's time to stop being a state sponsor of terrorism."²⁵² Head of the CIA George Tenet also backed up the US's disapproval and concerns in a testimony to the Armed Services Committee in March 2002: "The initial signs of Tehran's co-operation and common cause with us in Afghanistan are being eclipsed by Iranian efforts to undermine the US there ... We have seen little reduction in Iran's support for terrorism in the past year ... Iran remains a serious concern because of its across-the-board pursuit of WMD and missile capabilities."²⁵³ Finally Defence Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld again condemned Iranian behaviour in a Defence Department briefing on 1 April 2002.²⁵⁴

The Israeli Lobby, however, were not the only players in Washington pushing for a tough line on Iran. Many saw the inclusion of Iran in an 'axis of evil' with Iraq and North Korea in President Bush's State of the Union speech as a triumph of the influence of the Defence Department over the State Department.²⁵⁵ Following the September 11th attacks, terrorism and combating terrorism were the priorities of the Bush Administration. Previous priorities, such as the missile shield were forced to take a back seat. The Defence Department became increasingly concerned at the links being

²⁵⁰ 'Arming Iran', Near East Report, (AIPAC, 5 November 2001), [www.aipac.org/result.cfm?id=1225]

²⁵¹ 'Back into the Dog-House', The Economist, (26 January 2002)

²⁵² Quoted in Pelletreau, R.H., 'How Iran Wound Up on the Axis of Evil', (draft of a speech given to the American-Iranian Bar Association, 12 March 2002)

²⁵³ Tenet, G.J., 'Hearing to receive testimony on the worldwide threat to US interests', Testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee, (19 March 2002), [www.senate.gov/armed_services/statement/2002/March/Tenet]

²⁵⁴ Rumsfeld, D., Department of Defense News Briefing, (Federal News Service, 1 April 2002), [www.defenselink.mil/news/Apr2002/t04012002_t0401sd]

²⁵⁵ Sick, G., 'The Clouded Mirror: US-Iran Relations and the Axis of Evil', [www.columbia.edu/cu/news/vforum/02/us_iran]

cultivated with Iran by the State Department to aid the 'war on terrorism. Without the threat from 'rogue' states like Iran, the missile shield was more difficult to justify. The Defence Department therefore sought to catapult nuclear proliferation back to the top of the agenda. They reawakened concerns about Iran's weapons programme within the Administration and therefore pushed the president into publicly acknowledging and reinforcing the potential nuclear threat of Iran.

Once again Iran's pragmatists and conciliatory Americans were undermined by Iranian hard liners, Israel and the Israeli Lobby, the Defence Department and attitudes prevalent in Washington and the opportunity for rapprochement passed.

CONCLUSION

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There can be no way forward for the US Iranian relationship as things currently stand in Washington and in Iran. The US's 'realist' *justifications* for policy must be recognised as such and the ideological aspect of the relationship must be acknowledged and addressed. As it is, both America and Iran are still perceived by many in both countries as two competing and incompatible worldviews pitted against one another. The idea of the hegemonic contest remains. This is largely for four reasons.

Firstly, the lack of communication and isolation since the Revolution has perpetuated mistrust and misunderstandings. The image of Iran in the US is still trapped in the past, making the US increasingly sceptical about the capability of the Islamic Republic to reform. The very fact that there is support in Washington, albeit tiny, for the Shah's son to regain the throne shows how out of touch America really is with realities in Iran.

Secondly, deep divisions in Iran's domestic politics have kept the American issue current and highly controversial. Forming some kind of dialogue with America represents what the reformists are trying to achieve and consequently what the conservatives are desperate to undermine. The basis of the revolutionary project in opposing American imperialism hold strong today, making compromise near to impossible. Until there is one, consistent, reformist voice emerging from Iran, negotiation with America is unlikely to succeed.

Israel is another significant obstacle. The Israeli government, through the Israeli Lobby, helps to keep the negative image of Iran prominent. Any positive moves by Iran are consistently undermined by the strength of influence Iran's adversaries have in Washington. This is such a significant problem that many commentators in Washington believe that Iran will never have relations with the US until it has built up relations with Israel. In the present climate, this looks a long way off.

Finally there is the problem of deep-rooted perceptions and beliefs. Due to the impact of the revolution and revolutionary ideology, the prevalence of Orientalist and neo-Orientalist stereotypes in America, an Islamic Iran will always be seen as an opponent of and contradiction to, in the Gramscian sense, the US's world order. Likewise, the history of antagonism means the US will always be viewed by Iran with the utmost

suspicion. Both America and Iran must look beyond the decades of demonisation and antagonism to see that now all that is between them are ideas. Ideas that can and are being challenged. Perceptions are not static or set in stone. Images and perceptions can alter merely with changes in presentation. Some in Iran, like Khatami, have begun to tackle this but they still have a very long way to go. It will not be until slogans such as 'death to America' or 'death to Israel' are no longer shouted in the mosques of Tehran or until people in America are educated in the ways and history of Islam and Islamic rule that America will even begin to relate to and understand Iran. Even then, centuries of negative stereotypes and decades of history will have to be rewritten and relearned. In an era where the threat from political Islam has become the new communism, this will be all the more difficult.

The US must be aware of its own image in the world. Unless America makes changes to the way it presents itself, they will fail to maintain and extend their world hegemony. The outpouring of sympathy and support after September 11th from all over the world, including the Middle East, was an opportunity for the US to consolidate and extend its influence. America's success as a superpower has always been due to its ability to make people believe in American ideologies and September 11th did much to boost these ideas. It was a period where the boundaries of right and wrong, of civilised and barbaric were clearly defined. The choice between American values of freedom and universal rights and the values of indiscriminate terrorism was stark and obvious.

America has not capitalised on this opportunity. Elements of unilateralism and dogmatism have crept into statements and policies leading to tensions in the world consensus. Opinions on the US's policies towards the conflict in the Middle East have reverted to accusations of double standards and bias towards Israel. Unilateral measures such as calling for the end of the leadership of the Palestinian Authority's democratically elected president, Arafat, or pushing for military action against Iraq have again isolated America from the world. American moves such as these are not viewed universally as legitimate targets for the US's war on terrorism which would benefit the whole international community, but are viewed as American domination. America has reverted to coercion not consensus, significantly damaging its hegemony. The American academic, Joseph Nye's criticises American foreign policy, arguing that: "the trick to extending American influence into the far future is to cajole and seduce the world into wanting what America wants rather than to bully it into sullen submission.

And nothing could be more deeply American, for a country whose Founding Fathers set out their arguments for independence with 'a decent Respect to the Opinions of Mankind'."²⁵⁶

America's dealings with Iran are a case in point. Isolation, criticism and condemnation of Iran only decreases US influence and ability to alter Iran for the better. Iran is a proud and independent country, only too aware of America's domination in the region and determined to resist it. However, as Khatami has shown, Iran is not adverse to communication with the US on an equal footing. Even if America's intention is to dominate the region, they must attempt to portray themselves differently. Otherwise the resentment that first emerged in Iran and is fostered in other parts of the Middle East will build up until America is rejected outright as an exploiter not friend of the region. The Iranian perspective of America will become universally accepted, much to the detriment of American influence and power.

America's containment policy feeds the very behaviour in Iran the US wishes to control. American engagement, on the other hand, could feed the behaviour the US wishes to encourage. If the US allows Iran to become part of the world order, recognising its strategic interests as legitimate, allowing it to become part of the economic community, the ideological challenge that Iran represents will disappear. Iran will have far more to lose from antagonising the US and very little justification for its criticism. If this policy ever emerges however, it will have to balance on a very narrow tightrope. If at any stage, America is deemed to be dominating Iran or Iran is deemed to be returning to its revolutionary past, rapprochement will falter.

Any form of rapprochement seems in the distant future. Suspicions and misperceptions on both sides remain too strong. The next opportunity for dialogue and co-operation lies in the forthcoming US action against Iraq. No matter what form this may take - military, economic, or political - the US will need Iran's co-operation. Iran's intelligence, influence and contacts amongst the Shi'ite and Kurdish communities (opponents of the Hussein regime), and practical assistance will all be useful, if not necessary, to any military campaign. If economic sanctions are to work, Iran must be willing to enforce them on its border. Likewise a political uprising or coup will involve

²⁵⁶ Walker, M., 'Safety in Numbers', Review of The Paradox of American Power: Why the World's Only Superpower Can't Go Alone by Joseph Nye, The Washington Post, (3 March 2002)

Shi'ite and Kurdish political figures allied to the Iranian government. The chances of this co-operation leading to rapprochement already looks highly unlikely. The Americans have voiced considerable concern over the prospect of a pro Iranian government in Iraq. Tehran, despite Saddam Hussein being no friend of the Iranians, has consistently opposed US action, horrified at the idea of an American military presence on both their eastern and western borders. Ideological antagonism may again prevent both from working together to benefit mutual interests.

It will not be until the 'wall of mistrust' can be broken down that rapprochement will ever succeed. Whether Khatami and the reformist movement or the 'track 2' process in Washington will ever be strong enough to do this is a hope, rather than a certainty.

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